



FIRST REPORT

FROM THE

Committee of Secrecy.

THE COMMITTEE to whom the several Papers referred to in his Majesty's Message of the 12th of May 1794, and which were presented (sealed up) to the House, by Mr Secretary Dundas, upon the 12th and 13th Days of the said Month, by his Majesty's Command, were referred; and who were directed to examine the Matters thereof, and report the same, as they should appear to them, to the House; have proceeded, in Obedience to the Orders of the House, to the Consideration of the Matters referred to them.

THEY find, on the first inspection, that the books and papers which they are directed to examine, contain a full and authentic account of certain proceedings of two Societies, calling themselves The Society for Constitutional Information, and the London Corresponding Society, who appear to be closely connected with other Societies in many parts of Great Britain, and in Ireland; and the Committee also observe, from recent circumstances, which have already come

until their oblation, that their proceedings appear to become every day more and more likely to affect the internal peace and security of these kingdoms, and to require, in the most urgent manner, the immediate and vigilant attention of Parliament.

The Committee have, therefore, thought it their indispensable duty, in the first instance, to submit to the House the general view which they have been enabled to form of these transactions, reserving a more particular statement for a subsequent Report.

In the book containing the Proceedings of the Society for Constitutional Information, which was found in the custody of the person sitting as Secretary to the Society, there are regular entries of what passed on each day of meeting, from the end of the year 1791, to the 9th of May in the present year.

From these it appears, that during almost the whole of that period, and with hardly any considerable interval, except during part of the Summer in 1792 and 1793, this Society has, by a series of resolutions, publications, and correspondence, been uniformly and systematically pursuing a settled design, which appears to your Committee to tend to the subversion of the established Constitution, and which has of late been more openly avowed, and attempted to be carried into full execution.

The principles on which this design is founded, are strongly and unequivocally proved, from resolutions formed as early as the 18th of May 1791, in which the Society approved the intention of publishing a cheap edition of the First and Second Parts of *The Rights of Man*; and resolved, " That a copy of
" Mr Paine's Letter (informing them of this intention) toge-
" ther with these Resolutions, be transmitted to all the Associ-
" ated Societies in town and country; and that this Society
" do congratulate them on the firm as well as orderly spirit
" and

" and tranquil perseverance manifested in all their proceedings, and exhort them to a steady continuance therein." And also, " That 3000 copies of the Letter and Resolution " should be printed for the use of the Society." This single circumstance would, in the judgment of your Committee, leave little doubt of the real nature of the designs entertained by this Society : Their conduct in other respects has corresponded with it.

On the 14th of May in the same year, they vote an Address, in terms of approbation and applause, to the Society of Jacobins at Paris.

They adopt a similar measure, under circumstances still more striking, by sending, on the 9th of November following, an Address to the National Convention of France, full of panegyric on the French Revolution, and expressing the strongest wishes for its progress and success. This Address was actually presented at the Bar of the Convention by two persons, of the name of Backus and Fred ; and the answer of, the President was read at the Meeting of the Society on the 7th of December 1792.

On the 14th of the same month, a letter is received from persons calling themselves the *Friends of Liberty and Equality*, at Laon, capital of the département de L'Allier ; and referred by the Society to their Committee of Correspondence.

On the 21st of the same month, certain Members are expressly appointed a Committee for Foreign Correspondence.

The proceedings of this Committee are ordered to be entered in a separate book ; and a letter received that day from the *Friends of Liberty and Equality* at Maastricht is referred to that Committee.

On the 25th of January and on the 1st of February 1793, (at the eve of the commencement of the war, and after the reported

repeated representations which had been made on the part of the British Government, complaining of the conduct of France), the citizens Barrere and Roland, (then leading Members of the French Convention), are admitted Associated Honorary Members of the Society; and the speeches of Barrere and St. André, (also an Honorary Member of the Society), as given in the *Moniteur* of the 4th, 6th, and 7th of January, are directed to be inserted in the books of the Society.

Subsequent to the Declaration of War, which interrupted this system of direct correspondence and concert with France, and down to the present time, the Society have continued, on various occasions, to manifest their attachment to the cause of the French Revolution; and have affected to follow, in their proceedings and in their language, the forms and even the phrases which are adopted in that country.

The next leading circumstance which has engaged the attention of your Committee, is the unceasing assiduity and diligence with which this Society have attempted to disseminate their principles, both by publications and resolutions industriously and extensively circulated, and by endeavouring to establish a general correspondence and concert among the other seditious Societies in the metropolis, and in different parts of England and Scotland, as well as in Ireland. With many of these this Society appears itself to have carried on an immediate correspondence, particularly with those at Sheffield, Norwich, and Manchester, who have, on all occasions, taken the most forward and active part in these transactions. In their correspondence with Norwich in particular, as early as the 12th of April 1793, there is ~~an~~ ^a passage which so clearly marks the real object, which (whatever may have been their pretence) they appear uniformly to have had in view, that your Committee think it right here to insert it.

" Extract of a Letter from the Secretary to the So-
 " ciety for Constitutional Information, to the Se-
 " cretary to the United Political Societies at Man-
 " chester, dated 15th April 1793.

" Where then are we to look for the remedy? To that
 " Parliament of which we complain? To the Executive
 " Power, which is implicitly obeyed, if not anticipated in
 " that Parliament? Or to ourselves, represented in some
 " Meeting of Delegates for the especial purpose of Re-
 " form, which we suppose you understand by the term
 " CONVENTION?

" It is the end of each of these propositions that we
 " ought to look to; and as success in a good cause must
 " be the effect of perseverance and the rising reason of the
 " time; let us determine with coolness, but let us perse-
 " vere with decision.—As to a Convention, we regard it as
 " a plan the most desirable and most practicable, so soon
 " as the great body of the people shall be courageous and
 " virtuous enough to join us in the attempt. Hitherto
 " we have no reason to believe that the moment is arrived
 " for that purpose.—As to any Petition to the Crown,
 " we believe it hopeless in its consequences. With re-
 " spect to the last of the proposals, we are at a loss to
 " advise.—If the event is looked to in the vote which may
 " be obtained from that body to whom this petition is to
 " be addressed, which of us can look to it without the pro-
 " spect of an absolute negative? In this point of view,
 " therefore, it cannot require a moment's consideration.
 " But if we regard the *policy* of such a petition, it may,
 " in our apprehension, be well worth considering as a warn-
 " ing voice to our present Legislators, and as a signal for
 " agitation to the majority of the people. Should such a

play

" plan be vigorously and generally pursued, it would hold
 " out a certainty to our fellow-countrymen that we are not
 " a handful of individuals unworthy of attention or con-
 " sideration, who desire the restoration of the ancient li-
 " berties of England; but, on the contrary, it might bring
 " into light that host of well-meaning men, who, in the
 " different towns and counties of this realm, are silently,
 " but seriously anxious for Reformation in the Govern-
 " ment.

" We exhort you with anxiety to pursue your laudable
 " endeavours for the common good, and never to despair
 " of the public cause."

But of all the Societies with which they corresponded, the two of the greatest importance are, The London Corresponding Society, (which has been already referred to, and with whom during this whole period the correspondence appears to have been continually kept up), and the Assembly which called itself The British Convention at Edinburgh. The first of these, it will be necessary for the Committee to advert to particularly. The proceedings of the second, are already sufficiently notorious. It is therefore only necessary here to add, that on the meeting of the Constitutional Society, on the 29th of October last, after their adjournment for the Summer, a letter was read from the Secretary of the Convention of the Friends of the People at Edinburgh, to the Secretary of the Corresponding Society—in consequence of which it was resolved that there should be an extraordinary general meeting to consider of sending Delegates to a Convention of Delegates of the different Societies in Great Britain, to be held at Edinburgh, for the purpose of obtaining a Parliamentary Reform.

On

On the Monday following, the 25th of October, this meeting took place. Two Delegates were chosen, and the following instructions given them :

" The Delegates are instructed, on the part of this Society, to assist in bringing forward and supporting any Constitutional measures for procuring a real Representation of the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament. That in specifying the reforms to be demanded of existing abuses, the Delegates ought never to lose sight of the two essential principles—General Suffrage and Annual Representation, together with the unreasonable right in the People to reform. And that a reasonable and known compensation ought to be made to the Representatives of the Nation by a national contribution.

" That the Delegates do punctually correspond with the Society, for the purpose of communicating information, and of receiving such further instructions as the exigency may require."

" And it was further resolved,

" That the Society be desired to write to the different Societies with which this Society is in correspondence, informing them that the London Corresponding Society, together with this Society, have elected Delegates to the Convention of Delegates to meet at Edinburgh on the 25th instant; and to request their concurrence in this important measure."

The Delegate appears, according to his instructions, to have corresponded with the Secretary of the Society; but no resolutions are entered on the subject, till the 17th of January, subsequent to the apprehension and trial of several of the Mem-

bers of the Convention at Edinburgh. On that day the Society passed the following resolutions :

" Resolved, That law ceases to be an object of obedience, whenever it becomes an instrument of oppression.

" Resolved, That we call to mind, with the deepest satisfaction, the merited fate of the infamous Jeffries, once Lord Chief Justice of England, who, at the era of the glorious Revolution, for the many iniquitous sentences which he had passed, was torn to pieces by a brave and injured people.

" Resolved, That those who imitate his example, deserve his fate.

" Resolved, That the Tweed, though it may divide countries, ought not, and does not make a separation between those principles of common security in which Englishmen and Scotchmen are equally interested ; that injustice in Scotland is injustice in England ; and that the safety of Englishmen is endangered whenever their brethren in Scotland, for a conduct which entitles them to the approbation of all wise, and the support of all brave men, are sentenced to Botany Bay ; a punishment hitherto inflicted only on felons.

" Resolved, That we see with regret, but we see without fear, that the period is fast approaching when the liberties of Britons must depend, not upon reason, to which they have long appealed, nor on their powers of expressing it, but on their firm and undaunted resolution to oppose tyranny by the same means by which it is exercised.

" Resolved, That we approve of the conduct of the British Convention, who, though assailed by force, have not been answered by arguments ; and who, unlike the Mem-

bern

" born of a certain Assembly, have no interest distinct from
 " the common body of the people.

" Resolved, That a copy of the above Resolutions be
 " transmitted to Clifton Skirving, Secretary to the British
 " Convention, who is now imprisoned under colour of law
 " in the tolbooth of Edinburgh."

Subsequent to this period the books of the Society are full of repeated declarations of approbation and attachment, addressed to Blair, Palmer, Skirving, Margaret, and Gerald, the persons recently convicted of sedition by the Court of Judicature in Scotland; and of the most violent and inflammatory attacks on the proceedings of that Court.

Your Committee have thus far traced separately some of the leading proceedings of this Society, as appearing from the entries in their own books. Before they take notice of those of a more recent date, and which are in the present moment of more immediate importance, it becomes necessary to give an account of the other Society, called The London Corresponding Society, because the measures which have been adopted during the last six weeks appear to have been the result of a more particular and intimate concert between the two Societies.

It appears from the evidence before your Committee, that the London Corresponding Society meet occasionally in a body, but that its ordinary meetings are in separate divisions in different parts of the town; that the number of these divisions has been gradually increasing; and that there are now about thirty of them established. That there is a Secretary to each division, another to the whole body, and a General Committee formed from one member of each division. That when the Society originally met (which is stated to have been in 1792) it consisted of about two hundred persons, but that in

about six months it had considerably increased, and it was agreed that it should divide itself into ten different divisions; that afterwards it was the plan, that when the numbers of any division amounted to more than thirty, they should divide themselves again : That this has not been strictly adhered to ; but nevertheless, in some instances, several separate divisions have been formed out of one. One of these divisions is said now to consist of six hundred persons, and the number of the others to be various.

It further appears, that this Society has been in the habit of corresponding with the Societies in the country, particularly at Sheffield, Manchester, Bristol, Coventry, Nottingham, Derby, Leicester, Norwich, Birmingham, Leeds, Newcastle upon Tyne, Ryeiton, York, Hereford, Edinburgh, and different Societies in Scotland.

This Society appears likewise, in the course of the year 1792, to have presented an *Adresse* to the French Convention, of a nature similar to that from the Society for Constitutional Information, and to have communicated it to this latter Society, in whose book it is entered.

The Committee are not enabled to lay before the House a connected statement of the proceedings of the Corresponding Society, from the time of its institution, as the Committee are not in possession of any regular journal of them. But they think it right here to insert a printed paper, which was found in the custody of the Secretary of the Society, and contains an *Adresse* stated to have been agreed upon at a General Meeting of this Society, on the 20th of January last.

[The
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[The following is a copy of the said printed Paper.]

" At a General Meeting of the London Corresponding
 " Society, held at the Globe Tavern, Strand, on
 " Monday the 20th day of January, 1794; Chosen
 " John Martin in the Chair. The following Address
 " to the People of Great Britain and Ireland was
 " read and agreed to.

" C I T I Z E N S ;

" We find the nation involved in a war, by which, in the
 " course of ONE campaign, immense numbers of our coun-
 " trymen have been slaughtered ; a vast expense has been
 " incurred ; our trade, commerce, and manufactures, are
 " almost destroyed, and many of our manufacturers and
 " artists are ruined, and their families starving.

" To add to our affliction, we have reason to expect,
 " that other taxes will soon be added to the intolerable load
 " of imposts and impositions with which we are already
 " overwhelmed ; for the purpose of defraying the expenses
 " which have been incurred, in a fruitless crusade, to re-
 " establish the odious despotism of France.

" When we contemplate the principles of this war, we
 " confess ourselves to be unable to approve of it, as a mea-
 " sure, either of justice or discretion ;—and if we are to
 " form our calculation of the result, from what has already
 " passed, we can only look forward to defeat, and the eter-
 " nal disgrace of the British name.

" While we are thus engaged in an expensive and ruin-
 " ous foreign war, our state at home is not less deplorable.

" We are every day told, by those persons who are in-
 " terested in supporting the *corrupt* list, and an insurmon-
 " able host of *swaggy* placemen, that the Constitution of Eng-

" land

" And in the perfection of human wisdom ; that our laws
 " (we should rather say, *their* laws) are the perfection of
 " justice ; and that *their* administration of those laws is so
 " impartial and so ready, as to afford an equal remedy,
 " both to the rich and to the poor ; by means of which,
 " we are said to be placed in a state of absolute freedom,
 " and that our rights and liberties are so well secured to us
 " as to render all invasion of them impossible.

" When we ask, how we enjoy these transcendent privi-
 " leges ? we are referred to *MAGNA CHARTA*, and
 " the *BILL OF RIGHTS* ; and the glorious *REVOLU-*
 " *TION*, in the year 1688, is held out to us as the hap-
 " py work of British liberty.

" *CITIZENS :*

" We have referred to *Magna Charta*, to the *Bill of*
 " *Rights*, and to the *Revolution*, and we certainly do find
 " that our ancestors did establish wise and wholesome laws :
 " But we as certainly find, that, of the venerable Consti-
 " tution of our ancestors, hardly a vestige remains.

" The only chapters of the Great Charter, which are
 " now in legal existence, are the 14th and 29th.

" The important provision of the 14th chapter runs
 " thus :

" A freeman shall not be amerced for a small fault, but
 " after the manner of the fault ; and for a great fault after
 " the greatness thereof, saving to him his contentment ;
 " and a merchant likewise, saving to him his merchandise ;
 " and any other's villain than ours shall be likewise amerced,
 " saving to him his wainage ; and none of the said amerc-
 " elements shall be effected, but by the oath of honest and
 " lawful men of the vicinage."

" But

" But by the usurped power of the judges, in affixing
 " fines (and what fines!) in the cases of misdemeanors;
 " this glorious right of the subject, of having these fines
 " assessed by the Jury (the only possible protection from
 " slavery and the vilest oppression), is unjustly and infam-
 " ously wrested from us.

" The provision of the 29th chapter runs thus :

" No freeman shall be taken or imprisoned, or be dis-
 " of his freehold, or liberties, or free customs, or be out-
 " lawed, or exiled, or any otherwise destroyed, nor we
 " will not pass upon him, nor condemn him, but by the
 " lawful judgment of his peers, or by the law of the land.
 " We will sell to no man, we will not deny, or defer to
 " any man, either justice or right."

" The various methods now in constant practice by which
 " the benefits of this provision are totally defeated and de-
 " stroyed, might induce us to suppose, that the GREAT
 " CHARTER has been repealed; if we did not assuredly
 " know, that it is the fundamental basis of our Consti-
 " tution ; which even the REAL representatives of the peo-
 " ple (much less the miserable nominees of HELSTONE
 " and OLD SARUM) have not the right, nor (as we trust
 " it will be found by experience) the POWER to repeal.
 " Yet, what do we find in practice? Unconstitutional and
 " illegal INFORMATIONS EX OFFICIO, that is, the
 " arbitrary will of the King's Attorney General, usurping
 " the office of the ACCUSING Jury; and the interested
 " oath of a vile common informer, with the judgment of as
 " vile a common trading or passioned justice, substituted in
 " the room of our birth-right, an impartial trial by our Country.

" Add to this, that the exorbitant expense of judicial

" proceedings,

" proceedings, the usual practice of arbitrarily and repeat-
 " edly annulling the verdicts of Juries, and the dilatory
 " practice of the Courts, most openly and shamefully con-
 " tradict the clause which forbids the denial, the delay,
 " and the sale of justice.

" A man accused of FELONY (for which, by the common
 " law of England, his life and goods are forfeited) may be
 " held on finding two sureties for forty pounds each; but
 " but upon a charge of MISDEMEANOUR by *verba only*,
 " bail to the amount of ONE THOUSAND POUNDS
 " has been demanded.

" Upon conviction also, for such misdemeanour, enormous
 " fines, long and cruel imprisonments unknown to our
 " ancient laws, and unfashioned by any new statutes, have
 " of late (and but of late) been too frequently and too
 " oppressively inflicted. And all this, although by this
 " Bill of Rights it is declared, that "excessive bail shall
 " not be demanded, nor cruel, and unusual punishments
 " inflicted."

" If we look to IRELAND, we find that acknowledged
 " privilege of the people, to meet for the support and
 " protection of their rights and liberties, is attempted, by
 " terror, to be taken away by a late infamous *Act of Parlia-*
 " *ment*: Whilst titles of honour—No, but of dishonour—
 " are bestowed; and new sources of corruption opened, to
 " gratify the greedy prostitution of those, who are the in-
 " struments of this oppression.

" In SCOTLAND, the wicked hand of power has
 " been impudently exerted, without even the wretched
 " formality of an *Act of Parliament*. Magistrates have
 " forcibly intruded into the peaceful and lawful meetings
 " of Freemen; and, by force, (not only without law,
 " but against law), have, under colour of magisterial office,

" interrupted their deliberations, and prevented their
 " assentation.

" The wisdom and good conduct of the BRITISH
 " CONVENTION at Edinburgh, has been such, as to defy
 " their bitterest enemies to name the law which they have
 " broken; notwithstanding which, their papers have been
 " seized, and made use of as evidence against them; and
 " many virtuous and meritorious individuals have been, as
 " cruelly as unjustly, for their virtuous actions, disgraced
 " and defaced by infamous and illegal sentences of trans-
 " portation. And these unjust and wicked judgments have
 " been executed with a rancour and malignity, never before
 " known in this land: our respectable and beloved fellow-
 " citizens have been cast FETTERED into dungeons amongst
 " felons in the hulks, to which they were not sentenced.

" CITIZENS :

" We all approve the sentiments, and are
 " daily repeating the words, for which these our respectable
 " and valuable brethren are thus unjustly and inhumanly
 " suffering. We too associate in order to obtain a fair, free,
 " and full representation of the people in a house of real
 " national representatives. Are we also willing to be treat-
 " ed as FELONS, for claiming this our inborn right, which
 " we are determined never to forego but with our lives,
 " and which none but thieves and traitors can with to with-
 " hold from us? Consider, it is one and the same corrupt
 " and corrupting influence which at this time domineers in
 " Ireland, Scotland, and England. Can you believe, that
 " those who send virtuous Irishmen and Scotchmen fettered
 " with felons to Botany-Bay, do not meditate and will not
 " attempt to seize the first moment to send us after them?
 " Or, if we had not just cause to apprehend the same in-

" human treatment ; if, instead of the most imminent
 " danger, we were in perfect safety from it : Should we
 " not disdain to enjoy any liberty or privilege whatever,
 " in which our honest Irish and Scotch brethren did not
 " equally and as fully participate with us ? Their cause
 " then and ours is the same : and it is both our duty and
 " our interest to stand or fall together. The Irish Par-
 " liament and the Scotch Judges, seduced by the same
 " English influence, have brought us directly to the point.
 " There is no further step beyond that which they have
 " taken. We are at issue. We must now choose at once
 " either liberty or slavery for ourselves and our posterity.
 " Will you wait till BARRACKS are erected in every
 " village, and till *fugitive* Hottentots and Hanoverians are
 " upon us ?

" You may ask perhaps, by what means shall we seek
 " redress ?

" We answer, that men, in a state of civilized society, are
 " bound to seek redress of the grievances from the laws ;
 " as long as any redress can be obtained by the laws. But
 " our common Master whom we serve (whose law is a law
 " of liberty, and whose service is perfect freedom) has
 " taught us not to expect to gather grapes from thorns, nor
 " figs from thistles. We must have redress from our own
 " laws, and not from the laws of our plunderers, extortion-
 " ers and oppressors.

" THERE IS NO REDRESS FOR A NATION, CIR-
 " CUMSTANCED AS WE ARE, BUT IN A FAIR,
 " FREE, AND FULL REPRESENTATION OF THE
 " PEOPLE.

" RESOLVED, That during the ensuing Session of
 " Parliament, the General Committee of this Society do
 " meet daily, for the purpose of watching the proceedings

" of

of the Parliament, and of the administration of the Government of this country: And that, upon the first introduction of any bill or motion tending to the liberties of the people, such as, for **LANDING FOREIGN TROOPS IN GREAT BRITAIN or IRELAND**, for suspending the **HABEAS CORPUS ACT**, for proclaiming **MARTIAL LAW**, OR FOR PREVENTING THE PEOPLE from MEETING IN SOCIETIES for CONSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION, or any OTHER INNOVATION of a similar nature, that, on any of these emergencies, the General Committee shall issue summonses to the Delegates of each Division, and also to the Secretaries of the different Societies affiliated and corresponding with this Society, forthwith to call a **GENERAL CONVENTION of the PEOPLE**, to be held at such place and in such a manner as shall be specified in the summons, for the purpose of taking such measures into their consideration.

Resolved, that the preceding Address and Resolution be signed by the Chairman, and printed and published.

J. MARTIN, CHAIRMAN.

T. HARDY, SECRETARY.

COMMITTEE ROOM, January 23. 1794.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That a hundred thousand Copies of the Address to the People of Great Britain and Ireland, voted at the General Meeting, be printed and distributed by the Society.

Resolved Unanimously, That the following toast, drunk at the Anniversary Dinner of the Society, be printed at the end of the Address.

J. THE

" I. THE RIGHTS OF MAN; and may Britons never want spirit to assert them.

" II. The *Bright Convention*, lately held at Edinburgh; and success to the important object it had in view.

" III. *Citizen William Birken*, charged by the sentence of the Court of Judiciary, with the *honour* of being the cause of calling that Convention.

" IV. The *London Corresponding Society*, and other patriotic Societies of Great Britain and Ireland.

" V. *Citizen Murrell Margaret*, the condemned Delegate of this Society; and may his *manly* and *patriotic* conduct be rewarded by the attachment of the people.

" *Citizen Gerald* then arose, and in a stream of inspiring eloquence, pronounced the just eulogium of this truly valuable Citizen, so emphatically called by *Citizen Ashington* (one of the witnesses on his trial) the **SECOND SIDNEY**. He concluded with wishing we might *not* *lose the light of Bright France, then live the first of June*.

" VI. *Citizen Joseph Gerrald*, the other Delegate of this Society, now under prosecution; and may his concluding sentiment be engraven upon every British heart.

" VII. The transactions at *Trafalgar*. May Britons remember them as they ought, and profit by *dear* *brave* *experience*.

" VIII. *Citizen Hamilton Ross*, and the other *true* patriots of Ireland; and may the authors of the *Convention* find that they have committed a *hall*.

" IX. *Citizens Blair and Palmer*—May their sentence be *speedily* *reversed*, and *Botany Bay* be peopled with a colony of *real* criminals.

" X. Success to the arms of *freedom* against whomsoever directed; and confusion to *despots* with whomsoever allied.

" XI. All that is good in every constitution : and may we
 " never be superstitious enough to reverence in any that
 " which is good for nothing.

" XII. *Citizen Thomas Paine*—May his virtue rise su-
 " perior to calumny and suspicion, and his name still be
 " dear to Britons.

" XIII. *Lord Loughborough, the Earl of Mordaunt, Sir*
 " *Gilbert Elliot*, and the other apostates from liberty : and
 " may they enjoy the profits of their apostasy *so long as*
 " *they live*.

" XIV. A speedy and honorable peace with the brave
 " *republic of France*.

" XV. The *starving manufacturers and neglected peo-*
 " *ple of Great Britain and Ireland*.

" XVI. *Citizen John Fry* : and a speedy restoration of
 " that health which he lost in the dungeons of Newgate.

" XVII. The *victims and spirited Citizens*, now in con-
 " finement for matters of opinion : And may we show them
 " by our conduct, that they are not forgotten."

On this paper it appears unnecessary to offer any comment,
 or to do more than call the attention of the House to the
 concluding Resolution.

On the 17th of March the Society sent a letter to the Society
 for Constitutional Information, to which the Committee also
 sent it right to call the attention of the House, as it led to
 the particular concert already taken notice of, between the
 two Societies, and to the recent measures founded thereupon,
 which now remain to be taken notice of.

This letter, and the Resolutions of the two Societies in con-
 sequence, are stated in a printed paper, which was likewise
 found in the custody of the Secretary of the Society, a copy
 of which is here subjoined. They are also entered in the
 book of the Society for Constitutional Information.

" March

" March 27th 1794.

" To the Secretary of the Society for Constitutional In-
formation.

" GENTLEMEN,

" I am directed by the London Corresponding Society
" to transmit the following Resolutions to the Society for
" Constitutional Information, and to request the sentiments
" of that Society respecting the important measures which
" the present juncture of affairs seems to require. The
" London Corresponding Society conceives that the mo-
" ment is arrived when a full and explicit declaration is
" necessary from all the friends of freedom—Whether the
" late illegal and unheard of prosecutions and sentences
" shall determine us to abandon our cause, or shall excite
" us to pursue a radical reform with an ardor proportioned
" to the magnitude of the object, and with a zeal as dis-
" tinguished as our ; and as the testimony of others in the
" same glorious cause is necessary. The Society for Con-
" stitutional Information is therefore required to determine
" whether or no they will be ready, when called upon, to
" act in conjunction with this and other Societies, to ob-
" tain a fair representation of the people : Whether they
" concur with us in seeing the necessity of a speedy Con-
" vention, for the purpose of obtaining, by a constitutiona-
" al and legal method, a redress of their grievances under
" which we at present labour, and which can only be ef-
" fectually removed by a full and fair representation of the
" people of Great Britain. The London Corresponding
" Society cannot but remind their friends, that the present
" crisis demands all the prudence, unanimity, and vigour,
" that ever was or can be exerted by men or Britons ; nor
" do they doubt but that manly firmness and consistency
" will

" will finally, and they believe shortly, terminate in the
 " full accomplishment of all their wishes.

" I am, Fellow Citizen,

" (In my humble measure)

" A Friend to the Rights of Man,

" T. HARDY, Secretary.

" Resolved Unanimously,

" I. That, dear as justice and liberty are to Nations, yet
 " the value of them is comparatively small without a de-
 " pendence on their permanency; and there can be no
 " security for the continuance of any right but in equal
 " laws.

" II. That equal laws can never be expelled but by a
 " full and fair representation of the people. To obtain
 " which, in the way pointed out by the Constitution, has
 " been and is the sole object of this Society. For this we
 " are ready to hazard every thing; and never, but with
 " our lives, will we relinquish an object which involves
 " the happiness, or even the political existence, of our
 " fellow-men.

" III. That it is the decided opinion of this Society, that
 " to secure ourselves from future illegal and scandalous
 " prosecutions, to prevent a repetition of wicked and un-
 " just sentences, and to seal those with and wholesome
 " laws that have been wicked from us, and of which
 " scarcely a vestige remains, there ought to be immediate-
 " ly a Convention of the people, by delegates deputed for
 " that purpose from the different Societies of the friends of
 " freedom, assembled in the various parts of this nation.
 " And we pledge ourselves to the public to pursue every
 " legal method speedily to accomplish so desirable a pur-
 " pose.

" It was resolved by the Society for Constitutional Infor-
 " mation, That their Secretary should assure the London
 " Corresponding Society, that they heartily approved of
 " their intentions, and would co-operate with them in ob-
 " taining an object of so much importance to the peace and
 " happiness of Society. And that he also request the Lon-
 " don Corresponding Society to send a delegation of its
 " members to confer upon the subject, with an equal num-
 " ber of the Society for Constitutional Information.

" A meeting of the Delegates from the two Societies be-
 " ing held, they came to the following resolutions.

" Resolved,

" First, That it appears to this Committee very desirable,
 " that a Convention, or General Meeting of the Friends of
 " Liberty, should be called, for the purpose of taking 'into
 " consideration the proper methods of obtaining a full and
 " fair Representation of the People.

" Second, That it be recommended to the Society for
 " Constitutional Information, and London Corresponding
 " Society, to initiate a regular and perishing correspon-
 " dence with all those parts of the country where such mea-
 " sures may be likely to be promoted, not only to enlighten
 " the Societies already formed, but to endeavour also to
 " produce such other Associations as may further the ge-
 " neral object.

" Third, That it appears to this Committee, that the
 " general object would be promoted if a Standing Commit-
 " tee of Co-operation between the two Societies were estab-
 " lished, for the purpose of holding personal communica-
 " tions with such Members of similar Societies in other
 " parts of the country, as may occasionally be in London,
 " and who may be authorised by their respective Societies,
 " to act with such Committee."

“ The above resolutions being reported to the Society
 “ for Constitutional Information, it was by them resolved,
 “ that the same should be entered on their books as part of
 “ the proceedings of the Society; and the Committee of
 “ Correspondence was appointed to co-operate with the
 “ Committee of the London Corresponding Society, in
 “ conformity with the third resolution.”

It further appears, from correspondence of a recent date
 between different Societies in the country, and the Secretary
 of the Corresponding Society, that some time in the course of
 a few weeks past, Circular Letters had actually been sent to
 different parts of the Kingdom, on the subject of assembling a
 Convention, and a printed paper to this effect has been found
 in the custody of the Secretary to the Society; which is here
 inserted, and which your Committee have good reason to be-
 lieve is a copy of the Circular Letter referred to.

[The following is a Copy of the said printed Paper.] “

“ CITIZENS!

“ The critical moment is arrived, and Britons must de-
 “ cide either with and aid firmness their claims to liberty,
 “ or yield, without resistance, to the chains that ministerial
 “ usurpation is forging for them. Will you co-operate
 “ with us in the only peaceable measure that now professes
 “ itself with any prospect of success? We need not inti-
 “ mate to you, that, notwithstanding the unparalleled auda-
 “ city of a corrupt and overbearing Faction, which at pre-
 “ sent tramples on the rights and liberties of the people,
 “ our meetings cannot in England be interrupted, without
 “ the previous adoption of a Convention Bill: A measure,
 “ it is our duty to anticipate, that the ties of union may
 “ be more firmly drawn, and the sentiments and views of

“ the

" the different Societies throughout the nation be compared,
 " while it is yet in our power, so as to guide and direct the
 " future operations of the Friends of Freedom. Resolve
 " then to one sacrifice more; and let us show our confi-
 " dence of this important truth—" If we are to be beaten
 " down with threats, persecutions, and illegal sentences,
 " we are unworthy—we are incapable of liberty."—We
 " must, however, be expeditious. Hessians and Austrians
 " are already among us; and, if we tamely submit, a flood
 " of these armed Barbarians may shortly be poured in upon
 " us. Let us form, then, another British Convention.
 " We have a central situation in our view, which we be-
 " lieve would be most convenient for the whole island;
 " but which we forbear to mention, (entrusting your con-
 " fidence in this particular), till we have the sanction of the
 " Societies with which we are in correspondence. Let us
 " have your answer, then, by the post, at farthest, earlier,
 " if possible, whether you approve of the measure, and how
 " many delegates you can send, with the number also, if
 " possible, of your Societies.

" We remain yours, in civic affection,

" THE LONDON CORRESPONDING SOCIETY.

" T. HARRY, Secretary.

" For the management of this business, we have appoint-
 " ed a Secret Committee; you will judge how far it is ne-
 " cessary for you to do the same."

Subsequent to the proceedings now stated, there was ano-
 ther general meeting of the Corresponding Society, held at
 Chalk Farm,—the proceedings of which are stated in a printed
 paper likewise found on the Secretary of the Society, and
 which your Committee find has been circulated by order of
 the Society.

This paper is here inserted (as follows):

At a GENERAL MEETING of the London Corresponding Society, held on the Green at Chalk Farm, on Monday the 14th of April 1794, J. LOVETT in the Chair, The following Letter was read.

TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SOCIETY OF THE
FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE.

SIR,

AT a crisis so important as the present, there needs no apology on the part of the "London Corresponding Society," for addressing itself to all other associated Societies, who have in view the same object as themselves.

To the "Society of the Friends of the People," arguments are not wanting to show the importance and absolute necessity of a full and fair representation of the people of Great Britain. They have investigated the subject for themselves; they have exposed to the world a series of plain and indisputable facts, which must excite in the mind of every man well disposed to his country, apprehensions of alarm for the security of the few remaining vestiges of liberty, from which, as Britons, we derive consolation.

Deeply impressed with considerations of this nature, the London Corresponding Society earnestly solicits in this time, the concurrence and assistance of the Society of the Friends of the People, in assembling, as speedily as the nature of the business will admit, a Convention of the Friends of Freedom, for the purpose of obtaining, in a legal and constitutional method, a full and effectual representation.

Our request is not made from the impetuosity of the moment, but after the maturest deliberations on the subject.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

" the importance of the object for which we are con-
 " tending, and of the dissensions we may expect from those
 " whose present interests render them hostile to the welfare
 " of their country.

" The opposition of such persons is no small argument
 " for the goodness of our cause; and their late conduct,
 " when compared with their former professions, exhibits a
 " depravity, unparalleled, we trust, on the page of hi-
 " story.

" Under the auspices of apostate reformers, we have late-
 " ly beheld serious and alarming encroachments on the li-
 " berties of the people.

" We have seen, with indignation and horror, men legally
 " and gravely assailed, dispersed by unconstitutional
 " powers, and their papers seized.

" We have seen some of our most virtuous brethren,
 " whose only crime has been an imputation on Mr Pitt and
 " his associates, sentenced to fourteen years transportation,
 " without the sanction of law, or even of pretence, of
 " which number, one was held up in the British Parlia-
 " ment as *apostate* and *condemned*, before he was even put
 " upon his trial.

" The insidious attempts also to introduce foreign troops
 " into this country, without the consent of Parliament, and
 " the intended bill to embody foreigners into his Majesty's
 " service, are measures sufficiently calculated to awaken
 " our fears, for the existence even of the name of liberty.
 " Nor can we overlook that part of the present system of
 " corruption, which maintains, out of the public plunder, a
 " train of spies, more dangerous to society than so many
 " assassins, whose avowed business is to destroy the friends
 " of the country, one by one.

" These are grievances which demand immediate redress,
 " and, when added to those evils which are necessarily con-

" meted with every *partial* representation of the people,
 " call for the strenuous exertions of every lover of his coun-
 " try.

" But we are told that the present is not the time for
 " reform, and that innovation may introduce disturbance.
 " Are these persons to judge of the proper time to make a
 " reform, who exist only by corruption? Are the people
 " of Britain to endure every thing without repining, with-
 " out ardently seeking a radical reform, because disturbance
 " may happen? Have the enemies to reform told us whence
 " these disturbances are to originate? Has a single event
 " yet been committed by the friends to freedom? Have not
 " all the riots, all the public disturbances, all the seditious
 " assemblies been excited by the enemies to reform? And
 " do they mean to tell us, that they will still find other in-
 " struments for their wicked designs; that they have yet
 " those who will at once repeat the outrages that have been
 " perpetrated in some parts of Britain, and attempted in
 " others?

" If such is the determination of those persons hostile to
 " a *fair* representation, let them look to the consequence, but
 " let them recollect that it has happened, and may happen
 " again, that those who kindled the flames have perished by
 " them.

" The friends to reform are friends to peace; their prin-
 " ciples can be promoted only by peaceable means; they
 " know of no other method of obtaining the object they
 " desire. But they will not be alarmed by the threats of
 " cruel oppressors; they will not draw back because they have
 " seen some of their best friends doomed to exile. They
 " will pursue the course in which they have begun, and turn
 " neither to the right nor to the left.

" Convinced as the London Corresponding Society is,
 " that as there is no power which exists, so there is no
 " power

power which can finally withstand the just and steady demands of a people resolved to be free: they will therefore look with confidence to the determination, and, they hope, to the co-operation of the "Society of the Friends of the People," in the attainment of an object which involves the dearest interests of society.

“ Convinced also that their intentions are of the purest
kind, they will never stoop to answer the calumnies of
their enemies; but will at all times, and in all circum-
stances, endeavour, by firmness and perseverance, to de-
serve the countenance and approbation of the best friends
of their country, *the friends of a fair representation of the
people of Great Britain.*”

100%

²² For the London Corresponding Society.

"THOMAS HARDY, Sec."

48 April 1, 1996

* COMPUTER ROOMS

FOURTH STREET, April 11, 1794.

" YOUR letter of the 4th instant, addressed to Mr
" SUMNER, Chairman of the FRIENDS OF THE PEOP-
" LE, was laid before that SOCIETY at their meeting
" on Saturday last; and they instructed their Committee to
" thank the LONDON CORRESPONDING SOCIETY
" for their communication, and to express the alarm they
" feel in common with every friend of Liberty, at the late
" extraordinary proceedings of Government, so ably de-
" tailed, and so justly reprobated by your Society. They
" assure you, that all the friends of reform may " look with
" confidence to the determination and co-operation " of
" this Society, in every peaceable and constitutional measure
" which shall appear to them calculated to promote the ob-

" felt of their infirmity; but they do not think, that
 " which is recommended in your letter, is likely to serve its
 " professed purpose. They fear it will furnish the enemies
 " of reform with the means of calumniating its advocates,
 " and, so far from forwarding the cause, will deter many
 " from countenancing that which they approve. For these
 " reasons, the Friends of the People must decline to send
 " Delegates to the Convention proposed by the London Cor-
 " responding Society: At the same time, they renew their
 " assurances of good will, and desire of preserving a pro-
 " per understanding and cordiality among all the friends of
 " parliamentary reform, notwithstanding any difference of
 " opinion that may occur as to the best method of accom-
 " plishing it.

" In name, and by order of the Committee,

" W. BRETON, Chairman."

To Mr T. HAVER, *Secretary to the*
London Corresponding Society.

" The following RESOLUTIONS were then passed unani-
 " mously:

" Resolved unanimously,

" I. THAT this Society have beheld with rising indig-
 " nation, proportioned to the enormity of the crime, the late
 " rapid advances of despotism in Britain; the invasion of
 " public security; the contempt of popular opinion; and
 " the violation of all those provisions of the Constitution
 " intended to protect the people against the encroachments
 " of power and prerogative.

" II. That our abhorrence and denunciation have been
 " particularly called forth by the late arbitrary and flagitious
 " proceedings of the Court of Justiciary in Scotland, where

" all

" all the doctrines and principles of the *Star Chamber* in
 " the times of *Charles the First*, have been *revised* and
 " *aggravated* : and whose sentences have been pronounced
 " in open violation of all law and justice, which must strike
 " deep into the heart of every man the melancholy con-
 " viction that *BRITONS ARE NO LONGER FREE*.

" III. That the whole proceedings of the late British
 " Convention of the People at *Edinburgh*, are such as claim
 " our approbation and applause.

" IV. That the conduct of *Cicero* *Mandator* and
 " *Gerald* in particular, by its strict conformity with our
 " wishes and instructions, and the ability, firmness, and
 " disinterested patriotism which is so eminently displayed,
 " has inspired an enthusiasm of zeal and attachment, which
 " no time can obliterate, and no persecution remove ; and
 " that we will preserve their names engraven on our hearts
 " till we have an opportunity to redress their wrongs.

" V. That any attempt to violate those yet remaining
 " laws, which were intended for the security of Englishmen
 " against the tyranny of Courts and Ministers, and the
 " corruption of dependent Judges, by vesting in such judges
 " a legislative or arbitrary power, (such as has lately been
 " extended by the Court of *Judiciary* in *Scotland*), might
 " be considered as dissolving entirely the social compact
 " between the English nation and their Government, and
 " driving them to an immediate appeal to that incontrovert-
 " ible maxim of eternal justice, *that the safety of the people*
 " *is the supreme, and, in case of necessity, the only law*.

" VI. That the serving and disciplining, in this country,
 " either with or without the consent of Parliament, any
 " bands of *emigrants and foreigners*, driven from their own
 " country for their known attachment to an infamous despo-
 " tism, is an outrageous attempt to *enslave and intimidate*
 " the free spirit of *Britons* : to subjugate them to an enemy

" of necessary out-thrusts, whose views and interests must
 " of necessity be in direct opposition to those of the nation,
 " and that no person whatever should be induced the people
 " to submit to so unconstitutional a measure.

" VII. That the unconstitutional project of raising money
 " and troops by forced benevolences, (and no benevolences
 " collected upon requisition from the King or his ministers
 " can ever in reality be voluntary), and the equally unjusti-
 " fiable measure of arming one part of the people against
 " the other, brought Charles the First to the block, and
 " drove James the Second and his posterity from the throne ;
 " and that consequently ministers, in advising such mea-
 " sures, ought to consider whether they are not guilty of
 " High Treason.

" VIII. That this Society have beheld with considerable
 " pleasure the *anxious regard* which the House of Lords
 " displayed for their own Constitutional rules and orders on
 " the fourth of the present month, upon the motion of Earl
 " Stanhope, concerning the interference of ministers in the
 " internal Government of France ; and that it is the firm
 " conviction of this Society, that this circumstance, when
 " properly detailed, will have a considerable effect in con-
 " vincing the country at large of the true dignity and utili-
 " ty of that branch of his HIS MAJESTY'S PARLIA-
 " MENT.

" IX. That the thanks of this meeting be given to EARL
 " STANHOPE for his manly and patriotic conduct during
 " the present session of Parliament ; a conduct which (un-
 " supported as it has been in the Senate, of which HE is so
 " truly honourable a Member) has, together with the firm-
 " ly interference of certain spirited and patriotic Associa-
 " tions, been nevertheless already productive of the sala-
 " tary effect of chasing the Hessian and Hanoverian merce-

" arises from our coasts, who, but for these exertions,
 " might have been marched out this into the very heart of
 " the country, together with others of their countrymen,
 " to have peopled the Barracks which every-where insult
 " the eyes of Britons.

" X. That it is the firm conviction of this Society, that a
 " steady perseverance in the same bold and energetic senti-
 " ments which have lately been avowed by the Friends of
 " Freedom, cannot fail of crowning with ultimate triumph
 " the virtuous cause in which we are engaged ; since, what-
 " ever may be the interested opinion of *transitory* legislators,
 " or *packed* majorities of *pretended* representatives, Truth
 " and Liberty, in an age so enlightened as the present, must
 " be invincible and omnipotent."

" This Society having already addressed M. MARGARET,
 " their Delegate, an ADDRESS to JOSEPH GERALD
 " was read as follows, and carried unanimously.

" To JOSEPH GERALD, a prisoner sentenced by the
 " High Court of Justiciary of Scotland, to Trans-
 " portation beyond the Seas for FOURTEEN
 " YEARS !

" We behold in you, our beloved and respected friend
 " and fellow-citizen, a martyr to the glorious cause of Equal
 " Representation, and we cannot permit you to leave this
 " degraded country without expressing the infinite obli-
 " gations the people at large, and we in particular, owe to
 " you for your very spirited exertions in that cause upon e-
 " very occasion ; but upon none more conspicuously than
 " during the sitting of the BARRISH Convention of the
 " PEOPLE at Edinburgh, and the consequent *promising*

Declaration from the *People* of Scotland, &c. &c. &c. (we

" (we will not call it *trial*) at the bar of the Court of Ju-
 " diciary.

" We know not what most deserves our admiration, the
 " splendid talents with which you are so eminently distin-
 " guished, the exalted virtues by which they have been di-
 " rected, the perseverance and undaunted firmness which
 " you so nobly displayed in resisting the wrongs of your in-
 " fested and oppressed country, or, your present martyr and
 " philosophical suffering under an arbitrary, and, till of late,
 " unprecedented sentence—a sentence, one of the most vin-
 " dictive and cruel that has been pronounced since the days
 " of that most infamous and *rev-nu-le-dig-ned* Court of Star
 " Chamber, the enormous tyranny of which cost the first
 " Charles his head.

" To you and to your associates we feel ourselves most
 " deeply indebted. For us it is, that you are suffering the
 " sentence of transportation with felons, the vilest outcasts
 " of society! For us it is, that you are doomed to the in-
 " hospitable shores of New Holland; where, however, we
 " doubt not you will experience considerable alleviation by
 " the remembrance of that virtuous conduct for which it
 " is imposed on you, and by the sincere regard and efforts
 " of your fellow-citizens.

" The equal laws of this country have, for ages past, been
 " the boast of its inhabitants: But, whither are they now
 " fled? We are animated by the same sentiments, are
 " daily repeating the same words, and committing the same
 " offences for which you are thus infamously sentenced; and
 " we will repeat and commit them until we have obtained
 " redress; yet we are unpunished! Either therefore the
 " law is unjust towards you, in inflicting punishment on the
 " exertions of virtue and talents, or it ought not to deprive
 " us of our share in the GLORY of the martyrdom."

" We

" We again, therefore, pledge ourselves to you and to
 " our country, never to cease demanding our rights from
 " those who have usurped them, until, having obtained an
 " Equal Representation of the People, we shall be enabled
 " to hail you once more with triumph to your native coun-
 " try. We wish you health and happiness; and be assured
 " we never, never shall forget your name, your virtues, nor
 " YOUR GREAT EXAMPLE.

" The London Corresponding Society.

" JOHN LOVETT, Chairman.

" THOMAS HARDY, Secretary.

" The 14th of April 1794."

" *It was also unanimously Resolved,*

" That the Committee of Correspondence be directed to
 " convey the approbation of this Society—I. To Archibald
 " Hamilton Rowan, prisoner in the Newgate of the city of
 " Dublin, for his unshaken attachment to the people, and
 " for his spirited assertion of their rights.

" II. To John Philipot Curran, for his admirable and
 " energetic defence of A. H. Rowan, and the principles
 " of Liberty, as well as for his patriotic conduct in Par-
 " liament.

" III. To the Society of United Irishmen in Dublin,
 " and to exhort them to persevere in their exertions to ob-
 " tain justice for the people of Ireland.

" IV. To Skirving, Palmer, and Blair, suffering the
 " same iniquitous sentences, and in the same cause with
 " our Delegates.

" V. To John Clark, and Alexander Reid, for their so
 " readily and disinterestedly giving bail for our Delegates,
 " instigated thereto solely by their attachment to Liberty,
 " uninfluenced by any personal consideration.

" VI. To

" VI. To Adam Gillies, Malcolm Laing, and James
" Gibson, for their able assistance given to Joseph Gerald,
" at the bar of the High Court of Justiciary at Edinburgh.

" VII. To solicitor Thomas Walker, of Manchester,
" and the people at large, on the event of his, as well as
" several other late trials, and on the development of the
" history of a system of spies and informers.

" VIII. To Sir Joseph Maybey, for his manly conduct
" at the late Surprised Meeting held at Epsom in Sur-
" rey.

" It was also unanimously Resolved,

" That 100,000 copies of the Proceedings and Resolu-
" tions of this Meeting be printed and published.

" J. LOVETT, Chairman.

" T. HARDY, Secretary.

" Resolved,

" That the thanks of this Meeting be given to the Chair-
" man, for his manly and impartial conduct this day.

" T. HARDY, Secretary."

From a review of these transactions your Committee feel
it impossible not to conclude, that the measures which have
been stated are directed to the object of affording a meeting,
which, under the name of a General Convention, may take
upon itself the character of a General Representation of the
People. However at different periods the term of Parliamentary
Reform may have been employed, it is obvious that the present
view of these Societies is not intended to be prosecuted by any
application to Parliament, but, on the contrary, by an open at-
tempt to supersede the House of Commons in its representa-

the

five capacity, and to assume to itself all the functions and powers of a National Legislature.

This object, as what is really intended to be attained by assembling a Convention, appears expressly and pointedly stated, even as early as the 15th of April 1793, in the letter to the United Societies at Norwich, already referred to; and the same letter sufficiently explains the policy in consequence of which, subsequent to that period, the topic of Parliamentary Reform has been still ostensibly brought forward in some of the communications which have been made public. As a further illustration of this observation, your Committee think it not immaterial to remark, that in a letter from Margaret, at Edinburgh, to the Secretary of the Society for Constitutional Information, in December 1793, it is particularly recommended to him, not to introduce politics in his letter, or at *least* nothing but what *concerns Reform*. Whatever disguise however may have been employed in an earlier period, seems in the later proceedings to have been wholly relinquished. The object is still stated to be a fair and equal representation of the people; but a General Convention of the People, to be chosen by the Delegates of the different Societies, is proposed for the purpose of obtaining this end. No mention is made of any application to Parliament, or of any amendment of the representation in *Parliament*.

The circular letter, inserted in a former part of this Report, recommends forming another British Convention, to be held in a central situation most convenient for the whole island; and states the appointment of a Secret Committee for that purpose.

The third resolution passed by the Corresponding Society on the 27th of March, and communicated to the Society for Constitutional Information, which was the foundation of the subsequent joint proceedings of the two Societies, states the ob-

just of the Convention to be for the purpose " of securing themselves from future illegal and scandalous prosecutions, to prevent a repetition of wicked and unjust sentences, and recall their wise and wholesome laws which have been wrested from them." Terms which appear to your Committee to be material, not so much on account of their general inflammatory tendency, as because they evidently point at obtaining a redress of supposed grievances, not by application to Parliament, but by acts of authority to be executed by themselves.

The resolutions afterwards passed on the 14th of April, contain open attacks on all the branches of the Legislature, and a direct invitation to the people to resist measures then in the contemplation of the Legislature; and especially stating, that they ought equally to be resisted, whether adopted with or without the consent of Parliament.

When, in addition to these considerations, the Committee reflect on the leading circumstances which they have already stated, of the declared approbation, at an early period, of the doctrine of the *Rigter of Man*, as stated in Paine's publications; of the Connection and Intercourse with French Societies, and with the National Convention, and of the subsequent approbation of the French System; and consider, that these are the principles which the promoters of a Convention evidently make the foundation of all their proceedings; they are satisfied, that the design now openly professed and acted upon, aims at nothing less than what is stated in his Majesty's message, and must be considered as a traitorous conspiracy for the subversion of the established Laws and Constitution, and the introduction of that system of anarchy and confusion which has totally prevailed in France.

There still remain two points connected with what has been already stated, which your Committee have not yet had the

opportunity of investigating as fully as they wish, but which appear too important to be wholly passed over.

It appears to your Committee, that in some of the Societies referred to, proposals have been received, and that measures have recently been taken, for providing arms to be distributed among the members of the Societies.

It also appears, from such information as your Committee have hitherto had the opportunity of receiving, that since the apprehension of the persons in whose custody the papers were found which have been referred to your Committee, there have been several Meetings of the Societies in different parts of the metropolis; that the designs which were before entertained have been by no means abandoned; and that, on the contrary, there have been some indications of a disposition to concert means for forcibly resisting such measures as may be taken for defeating their accomplishment, or for bringing the authors and abettors of them to justice.

END OF THE FIRST PART.

SECOND REPORT.

THE COMMITTEE to whom the several Papers referred to in his Majesty's Message of the 14th Day of May 1794, and which were presented (sealed up) to the House, by Mr Secretary Dundas, upon the 14th and 15th Days of the said Month, by his Majesty's Command, were referred; and who were directed to examine the Matters thereof, and report the same, as they should appear to them to the House;

HAVE further proceeded in the examination of the books and papers referred to them by the House, and of such other information as they have since obtained.

The latter has consisted of a variety of examinations and depositions taken before the Privy Council, of Papers found in the custody of different persons who have been apprehended, and of accounts received by the Secretary of State relative to discoveries made at Edinburgh, and in different parts of Scotland; all of which have been laid before your Committee.

The result appears to your Committee strongly to confirm all the propositions which they found it their duty, on the result of their enquiry, to submit to the House, and to leave no doubt of the nature, extent, and malignity of the extravagant designs which have been formed, of the regularity and

and

system, *and*

" are made of steel, tempered and polished after an approved
 " form. They may be fixed into any shafts, but for ones are
 " recommended, of the girth of the accompanying hoops at
 " the top end, and about an inch more at the bottom. The
 " blades and hoops, more than which cannot properly fit to
 " any great distance, will be charged One Shilling. Money
 " to be sent with the order. As the Instruction is in its im-
 " pendency, immediate encouragement is necessary.

Struck through } " Orders may be sent to the Secretary of the
in the original } "Sheffield Constitutional Society.

" Signed.

" To prevent post suspicion, direct to" [Here follows, in
 the original, the name of the person to whom the letters
 were to be addressed, and his residence at Sheffield.]

This letter contained another inclosed, directed to the Se-
 cretary of the Norwich Patriotic Society, which was found
 in the possession of the Secretary to the London Correspond-
 ing Society, and which is as follows :

" Fellow Citizens,

" The barefaced aristocracy of the present Administration
 " has made it necessary to prepare to sit upon the defensive,
 " in case of any attack upon the people.

" A plan has been formed for carrying into effect this ne-
 " cessary business. Pike blades are made with hoops for the
 " shafts to fit the top ends; the bottom end of the shafts
 " should be about an inch thicker, and for is recommended
 " for the shafts, selected by persons who are judges of wood.
 " The blades and hoops will be sold at the rate of One Shil-
 " ling, properly tempered and polished. The money sent
 " with the orders "

" Signed.

" Direct

" Direct to," [Here follows, in the original, the name of the person to whom the letters were to be addressed, and his residence at Sheffield] " to prevent the postmaster's suspicion."

Your Committee soon after found that by the different examinations taken before the Privy Council, it was fully established that the general idea of procuring arms (either muskets or pikes) to be distributed among the members, had of late been frequently the subject of conversation at different divisions among the leading members of the Corresponding Society, and among persons who have been most active in the measures lately taken; that although these conversations had frequently taken place, they had generally been after the business of the meetings was closed, and when only a few persons remained. It appears indeed to have been, in a great measure, agreed that this plan was not to be publicly mentioned at the divisions; particularly it was recommended by one of the most active persons not to mention it till the new plan of constitution for the society was settled. And it has appeared (in the course of this investigation) that the sewing business was all done by private members, and that it was held not fit to talk of the pikes but to those who were to be trusted: That the general business was done by a committee of delegates, but there was a secret committee of five persons, who transacted what was not to be entrusted to the whole of the Corresponding Society; that they met at private houses, and that all the correspondence comes to them, and what they think proper is laid before the Society. But although this plan of precaution and concealment must have prevented the discovery of a great part of this system, instances have occurred of proceedings at some of the divisions of the Corresponding Society, relative to procuring arms, which your Com-

mittee

mines have been enabled to ascertain. As early as November 1793, at a meeting of a division of the Society, held at a place named to the Committee, a violent speech was made by a member of the Society, recommending that arms should be procured, and mentioning that they were provided with arms and pikes at Sheffield; and another member said it would be good to provide pikes at six pence each: Afterwards, in the month of February last, at a meeting of one of the divisions of the Corresponding Society, named to the Committee, and at a place ascertained to them, it was proposed to issue new books, with the names and places of abode of the several members, and that the names of those who lived in the same neighbourhood should be placed together, that they might easily be assembled upon any emergency, in case Government should attempt to disperse their meetings; and a resolution for this purpose was passed soon after at a subsequent meeting.

At the same meeting a member of another division attended, and stated to the chairman, that he came to make a report from his division.—He stated a rumour that the Habeas Corpus Act would be soon suspended.—This intelligence he was deputed to give, that the Society at large might be prepared for the event: Upon this a speech was made by a person, who was a member of the committee mentioned in the former report, in which he recommended to each member to provide himself with arms and ammunition, in order to defend himself against any person who might attack him, whether they should be of this Country, Prussians, Russians, or Hanoverians. And in the beginning of April last, at the same division, it appears that a report was made from the General Committee, That an answer had been received from the Society for Constitutional Information, expressive of their desire to-operate with them in obtaining their great end; and

during

dealing a deputation might be sent to consult and deliberate with them. In consequence a certain number of the Committee were appointed: And on this occasion one of the members recommended to the citizens not to sit tamely flesh and inactive, but to rouse themselves, and, not only with words, but arms, assert their rights.—He said, they were on the eve of a general meeting, and they should go with their minds prepared to adopt a system which might be reduced to speedy practice, and rescue their fellow citizens (meaning the Scotch delegates) from their degrading situation. It also appears to your Committee, that a plan was in contemplation to subdivide each division into tythings, and to appoint tything men to each, for the purpose "of rendering themselves useful in case of emergency;" which was explained to mean, that in case the society should be interrupted by peace officers, or a press gang, they should resist any such interruption. As another instance of the measures taken to incite the people to arm, an account was given of a hand bill produced at one of the meetings, which was to the following effect:

¹⁴ The idea tells us we are in danger of invasion from the French.

¹¹ The sons tell us that we are in danger from the Hittites and Hittites.

²² "In other cult we should arm ourselves.—Get arms,
²³ and learn how to use them."

Several copies of this hand bill were proved to have been publicly produced at a meeting of one of the divisions, by a person who said he had printed them for the purpose of distributing as many as possible.

In the progress of the enquiry, information was received from

from a witness, whose accuracy has since been confirmed in a variety of striking instances, that a person named in the information, an active promoter of these measures, and a delegate of one of the divisions, had shown the witness a pile in his possession, of which a minute description was given. The witness stated this person to have given an account of the use to which these pikes might be applied; that it was supposed no regiment of horse could stand against them; that such pikes were manufacturing at Sheffield; and that he had received from the secretary of the Corresponding Society the direction of the person from whom he might procure them; that the price was to be one shilling a-piece, and if they cost more, the surplus would be paid by a person at Sheffield, who would be indemnified by the society. The witness also stated the same person to have given an account of a meeting intended to be held at a public house (which was named) on a day specified, for the purpose of fixing the number of pikes to be sent for. The person stated to have held this conversation, and another person said to have been present at it (who was also one of the most active members of the London Corresponding Society) were soon after apprehended, and a pike exactly answering to the description given by the witness was found upon each of them. In the subsequent investigation of the business, your Committee have received strong confirmation of the principal circumstances of the conversation stated by the witness, respecting the use to which the pikes might be applied, the direction given by the secretary of the Corresponding Society in order to procure them from Sheffield, the price to be paid for them, and the intended meeting for the purpose of fixing the number to be sent for, and of depositing one shilling a-piece for the purchase. One of the persons so apprehended, in explaining the use to be made of the pikes from Sheffield, said, the person was, and he himself

himself believed, the Government were conspiring against the people, and therefore should be resisted. Another witness has since stated, that he had understood from one of the persons apprehended, that his pilot was to be used (in case the people were to rise) for the particular purpose of keeping off the cavalry.

Your Committee, in the course of this examination, observed, that an account was given of some supposed meeting of military divisions, connected with the Corresponding Society, for the purpose of learning their exercise with muskets; and it was stated, that with a view to instructing them, there had been printed and sold a copper-plate engraving of the manual exercise, accompanied with a book of directions on the subject. This engraving was afterwards produced, and it was proved to have been helped by one person, and engraved by another, whose names were mentioned, both of whom were members of the London Corresponding Society, and one of them a secretary to one of the divisions; and to have been sold by another member of the Society to several members at a meeting of one of the divisions. A more particular account was afterwards given of a body formed for the purpose of exercising with fire arms, which had taken the name of The Loyal Lambeth Association, but which had held no communication with Government, nor received any authority for that purpose. It appears, that although this armed society bore the name of The Loyal Lambeth Association, none of the members belonging to it were of the parish of Lambeth, excepting the original proposer of the association, who was a member of the London Corresponding Society. The admission of persons who were afterwards members of the association was objected to at first, because they did not belong to the London Corresponding Society; but on promise that they would become members of the London Corresponding Society,

ty, they were admitted into this armed association. A gun engraver, who is also a member of the London Corresponding Society, and who furnished this association with muskets, was first introduced to the persons who set on foot the association by the secretary of the Corresponding Society. This association was regularly trained and exercised to the use of fire arms twice a-week. It has been given in evidence, that this association removed from the house of a tradesman in the borough, where they used to exercise, because they made so much noise with the arms that the workmen must know what they were about, the tradesman having different workmen, who might not be all of the same principle. Upon this suggestion, a committee was appointed to choose proper places for exercise, where the association might not be liable to be interrupted by the officers of police; and two places named to your Committee were appointed accordingly, to which the association adjourned in two separate divisions. At one of these places they exercised in a room on the second floor, and with the window curtains drawn; and on some occasions, at another place, by candle light, from eight to ten o'clock at night, with the shutters barred up. At the place where the Lumbeth Association met, there was a printed ticket of admission with the following inscription engraved on it, "*Liberty is right*" "*wherever found it.*" The object of all the persons who attended the association (as was collected from their conversation) was universal suffrage and universal election. If they could not obtain a reform in Parliament in any other way, they meant to have recourse to arms. The Committee have traced eighteen stand of arms actually purchased by this association. This number, purchased by persons apparently in very indigent circumstances, is a sufficient proof of their earnestness in the design in which they had engaged. But it further appears, that the same person who supplied this number had engaged to furnish arms, as the

numbers who desired to have them increased ; and that flint muskets had been mentioned as likely to be wanted for this occasion.——It also appears to your Committee, that other institutions of the same nature existed, and that subscriptions had been opened for the purpose of providing muskets. In addition to the means already enumerated for gradually providing pikes and muskets, it has appeared in evidence, that one of the schemes in agitation was to seize the arms in the shops of the gunsmiths in London, and to distribute the arms, so seized, among the members of the London Corresponding Society.

These proceedings in London, sufficiently important in themselves, became still more deserving of serious consideration, when combined with measures of a similar description taken at Sheffield, and in several parts of Scotland, and which not only coincide in point of time, but bear the strongest marks of deliberate concert and connection with the attempts in London, to which your Committee have already directed the attention of the House. Your Committee have already inserted in this Report a letter from a person at Sheffield, found in the possession of the secretary of the London Corresponding Society, and enclosing a direction to another person at Sheffield, who was to forward to the maker of the pikes all such orders as he might receive from London for that purpose.

It has appeared, from the concurrent testimony of several persons examined before the Privy Council, that this direction was actually given by the secretary of the Corresponding Society to one of its members ; that many persons were desirous of procuring pikes ; and that subscriptions had been already entered into, with a view of procuring them from Sheffield. One of the persons apprehended at Sheffield, who had been secretary to the Constitutional Society there, and upon whose

whose

whom a pike was found, acknowledged that he had seen the letter to the secretary of the Corresponding Society in London, containing the inclosure for Norwich; and that the writer told him that he had inclosed the letter for Norwich in the other for fear of suspicion: The same person also said, he could not doubt in the least that the pikes were to be furnished to London, according to the contents of the letter which had been explained to him at Sheffield. It appears that sometime in March last, a person calling himself Yorke, a member of the Constitutional Society at London, and who was chosen by them as one of their delegates to the Convention at Edinburgh, recommended it to the people of Sheffield to take arms, representing it as a matter of right, founded on the bill of rights, and observing that the opposite party was arming, and therefore that the other party should be armed also; that Yorke used these recommendations both in private and in public; told them in conversation, just after the meeting at Sheffield, where he had been chairman, that pikes were used in France; and recommended to the people to get arms, according to an advertisement published at Sheffield, saying that it was legal and constitutional; and that they ought to get pikes as in France. This measure of arming was approved of by the greater part of the Society at Sheffield, which appears from information before your Committee to be very numerous and to have been subdivided into 45 or 50 small bodies, or different clubs. In consequence of these recommendations, pikes were made at Sheffield under Yorke's orders, and the form and size were, regulated by his particular direction.—Your Committee think it of importance to call the attention of the house to this circumstance, as they shall have occasion to advert more particularly, in a subsequent part of this report, to the principles and views publicly avowed by Yorke at a meeting held at Sheffield on the 7th of April last. Four persons

are stated to have been employed in the manufacture of these pikes, and one of these persons to have worked at them for some weeks past; and it appears that several have been already made and sold to different persons at Sheffield, at the price of two shillings: The pike taken upon one of the persons apprehended at Sheffield answers precisely to the description given in the letter before inserted. In addition to this account of the measures taken for providing pikes, it must be observed, that the three persons apprehended at Sheffield came in declaring that they had seen there a pattern of an instrument which has, on different occasions, been used in military operations for impeding the approach of cavalry, and which was stated by the witnesses to be intended to be laid in the road at night for that purpose.—One of them said that he had no doubt that this instrument was formed with the same intention as the pike, to defend the meeting at Sheffield against the military. It was also stated, that about the time when these arms were prepared, they had refused at Sheffield (as will appear more particularly in the sequel of the report) that no further petition should be made to parliament on the subject of reform, although they intended to go on in their demands; and one of the persons examined said, if any meetings were to be held at Sheffield for the purpose of obtaining Universal Suffrage, and any attempt made to disturb such meeting, he thought the people would be justified in resistance.

While your Committee were employed in investigating the origin and progress of the plan for arming the people in London and at Sheffield, they received intelligence of the existence of similar designs in Scotland, which appear to have been in a much greater degree of forwardness, and to have been conducted with such secrecy that they might have produced the most serious consequences, if accident had not

led

led to a timely discovery of their nature and extent before they had been carried into execution. This intelligence was communicated to your Committee in several letters from Mr. Secretary Dundas, which contain so full a narrative of the circumstances leading to the discovery of this design, of the scope and nature of the design itself, of the principles with which it was controlled, and of the means by which it was to have been accomplished, that your Committee have thought they could not lay this important matter before the House in a more satisfactory manner than by inserting the letters at large in this place.—It is however to be observed, that besides what relates immediately to the particular head, these letters contain matters applying to other important branches of the subject of this report; and to which it will be necessary hereafter to refer; and that many of the important circumstances detailed in Mr. Dundas's letters have been also communicated to your Committee through other channels.

“ Whitehall, 19th May 1794.

“ S I R,

“ I have received this morning, from the Sheriff Depute
 “ of the county of Edinburgh, authentic information of an
 “ accidental discovery made on the 15th and 16th ult^o, the
 “ general report of which I feel it proper to state to you, as
 “ it seems materially connected with the enquiry in which
 “ the Secret Committee of the House of Commons is now en-
 “ gaged.

“ The creditors of a bankrupt having received informa-
 “ tion that part of his goods had been embezzled, and were
 “ sequestered in the house of an individual, the civil warrant
 “ was issued, authorizing a search to be made in the suspec-
 “ ted place; and in carrying it into execution, on the after-
 “ noon of the 15th, the officers discovered in a private place,
 where

" where they appeared to have been concealed, twelve pike
 " or spear heads. The proprietor of the house, who hap-
 " pened to be from home at the time, was soon thereafter
 " taken into custody, and on being carried before the proper
 " magistrate for examination, refused to give any account of
 " their weapons, to whom they belonged, or for what pur-
 " poses they were intended. On a more narrow search, there
 " was likewise discovered in a private and concealed part of the
 " house, two other pike or spear heads, similar to the others,
 " two battle axes, and a shaft or pole, with a fletch on the
 " end, fitted for receiving either the spear head or battle axe.

" Immediate inquiry being made after the persons with
 " whom this individual had lately been seen in company, and
 " two blacksmiths being mentioned among them, their houses
 " and shops were immediately searched; One of the two was
 " also taken into custody; the other escaped and absconded.
 " In the shop of the first of these men were found four
 " pike or spear heads, finished, fitted with screws and sockets,
 " and ready to be fixed on shafts; eight battle axes, also fitted
 " and finished; and twenty blades more not quite finished,
 " but nearly so.

" In the shop and dwelling house of the other, who had ab-
 " sconded, no such weapons were found; but the appren-
 " tice, on being examined before a magistrate, acknowledged
 " that the pike or spear heads first discovered had been pri-
 " vately manufactured in their master's shop during the course
 " of this fortnight past, and carried privately to his house as
 " soon as completed.

" The battle axes and blades appear also to have been ma-
 " nufactured within this fortnight past; and were intended,
 " as the maker of them said, for the purpose of arming the
 " people, should an invasion take place. But it appears,
 " that to his apprentices, whom he had employed in assisting
 " him

" him to make them, he pretended they were meant for a
 " gate; an account obviously false, as he could not point out
 " any gate for which these weapons were intended, nor name
 " any person who had ordered him to frame a gate of so parti-
 " cular a construction. "

" These circumstances have induced the magistrates to con-
 " sult all the persons concerned, for examination; and the
 " result of the enquiries which are at present carrying for-
 " ward, I expect will be regularly communicated to me.—It
 " is proper also to inform you, that all the persons chiefly con-
 " cerned appear to have been members of the British conven-
 " tion which met at Edinburgh last winter; and since the dis-
 " solution of it have continued the most active and leading per-
 " sons in the societies whose delegates composed the principal
 " part of that meeting, who appear at present taking measures
 " for calling another convention of the same nature, which
 " they expected is to take place soon in England; and some
 " of whom have acknowledged that the propriety of the indi-
 " viduals composing these societies arming themselves with
 " spears and pikes has, within these few weeks past, been the
 " subject of conversation amongst them, and steps taking for
 " carrying that purpose into execution with caution and
 " secrecy.

" The silence of one of the persons, the inconsistent and
 " contradictory account of the other, and the flight of the
 " third, throw a very strong suspicion on the purposes and in-
 " tentions of the parties concerned in this transaction. The
 " Sheriff is, in the course of his duty, proceeding to investi-
 " gate the matter more accurately: But I consider it necessary
 " and proper so, communicate through you to the committee
 " information so intimately connected with the object of its
 " enquiries,

" enquires, however imperfect that information still is, but
 " which I have no doubt will soon be completed.

" I am,

" SIR,

" Your most obedient

" Heretic Servant,

" Right Hon. Mr. Pitt," " HENRY DUNDAS."

" Whitehall, 23d May 1794

" SIR,

" I have received this morning farther accounts from the
 " Sheriff Depute of Edinburgh, of the transactions stated in
 " my last letter; and the result of the enquiries first made by
 " that magistrate, and which are still going forward, appear
 " to me of such a nature as to deserve the particular attention
 " of the secret committee.

" One of the individuals mentioned in my former letter has
 " since made a disclosure, and a person since taken into cus-
 " tody, and who appears to have been privy to the whole
 " transaction, has confessed, that these weapons were the first
 " of a very large number and quantity, actually ordered to be
 " made, and intended to be privately dispersed among the
 " members of the various societies throughout Scotland, call-
 " ing themselves friends of the people, and who appear to be
 " at present employed in taking measures for calling together
 " another British Convention of delegates to be held in Eng-
 " land. An order has been given from one town where in
 " Scotland, for a large quantity of weapons of the nature de-
 " scribed; no less a number than 4,000 has been mentioned,
 " and more are intended to be distributed in Edinburgh. Emis-
 " saries appear also to have been dispatched, within this fort-
 " night or three weeks past, to the manufacturing towns in
 " the west o' Scotland, for the purpose of founding the insti-

" tutions

" nations of flesh of the inhabitants there who are known to
 " be members of these societies ; and there is reason to believe,
 " from information received from various different quarters,
 " that these persons have by no means been unsuccessful.

" Paisley is in particular alluded to as being in a state of great
 " readiness ; and there has been positive information received
 " through other channels, that within these short weeks per-
 " sons of that description have assembled themselves to a very
 " considerable number in the night time, for the purpose of
 " pushing the sale of arms. The particulars of this infor-
 " mation, and the extent to which these meetings have pro-
 " ceeded, are at present matter of enquiry with the proper
 " magistrates of the place ; but the result has not yet been
 " received.

" The formation of this plan is now traced home to certain
 " persons, some of whom are in custody, who appear to be
 " entrusted by these societies in Scotland with the most unli-
 " mited powers in directing their future proceedings—carry-
 " ing on their correspondence—and who act as a committee
 " of secrecy, consisting of a certain number of persons, the
 " principal and most active members of the British Colonization.
 " The choosing of delegates to the expected Convention in
 " England, the place of whole meeting is not yet decided,
 " and the raising of contributions among the various societies
 " throughout Scotland for defraying the charges of such dele-
 " gates appear to be the material part of their present employ-
 " ment, and in which it would seem they have made some pro-
 " gress. And it is the same committee who have, for these some
 " weeks past, been consulting still taking measures for raising
 " themselves and the members of the various clubs with gifts
 " and battle axes, and who have employed the persons above
 " mentioned in manufacturing them. The scheme appears to
 " have been first proposed and agreed upon about a month

ago; to have been thus carried on with the utmost secrecy
and caution; and the weapons, so far as has yet been disco-
vered, manufactured by such persons, in such small quanti-
ties, in such circumstances, and under such pretences, as
not to render the progress of the work probably liable to
suspicion or detection; and it was brought to light by the
very accidental and singular incident which I mentioned in
my former letter.

I have the satisfaction of observing, that the magistrates
and officers of the law in Scotland have been, and still con-
tinue, active in the searches and enquiries making at the
different suspected places within their respective jurisdictions.
—In Perth and Dundee poisoning has been discovered which
can lead me to believe that manufactures have been taken in
either of these places for making arms, the manufacture of
which seems to have been confined to Edinburgh, and in-
tended to have been gradually dispersed from thence to such
places as required them.—No such weapons have been dis-
covered at Paisley or in its neighbourhood; though the in-
tention of arming, and holding regular nightly meetings,
are perfectly ascertained.

Information has also been communicated, of the authen-
ticity of which there is no room to doubt, that a confy tra-
y has been formed, as soon as a proper number of the Crown-
poes were distributed among the friends of the people in
Edinburgh, to seize in the night the persons of the princi-
pal magistrates, and Officers of the law; the banks, the
public offices, guards, and police, and after enticing the
soldiers from the castle, by kindling a fire in the middle of
the city, to intercept them on their return, by means of
different armed parties to be properly stationed for that
purpose.

It appears likewise, from indisputable facts, that the
work

" most secret and artful means have been and are still using
" with the Fencible Regiments in Scotland to excite them
" to disobedience and desertion".—The printed paper which I
" herewith transmit has been industriously circulated for that
" purpose.

" I have the honour to be,

" SIR,

" Your most obedient

" Humble servant,

" HENRY DUNDAS."

" Right Honble. Mr. Pitt."

" SIR,

" Whitehall, 24th May, 1794.

" I have looked no further concerns of the result of the
" enquiries going on in Edinburgh, but I am sorry to state
" that I have received information from the Sheriff of the
" county of Renfrew, confirmed by letters received from o-
" ther respectable persons in Paisley, that the Magistrates of
" that place having, in the course of their enquiry, com-
" mitted on the afternoon of the 19th a man to custody for
" further examination, a considerable number of persons
" (several hundreds) assembled in the evening, and after
" choosing a president, whom they addressed by the title of
" Citizens President, voted a number of resolutions to the
" following purpose—That a National Convention should be
" immediately called, to which they would send delegates—
" That they should not petition parliament, as it was to
" themselves alone, and to such convention, they could look
" for redress. They then proceeded to consider the conduct
" of the Sheriff and Magistrates in committing their brother
" citizen, as he was termed; and, after much discussion to

" 12

" Appendix A. (Nos. 1-3)

" to the propriety of immediately releasing him by force, the
 " majority seemed inclined to take mild measures first, and
 " to send a deputation to ask his release. But the Magis-
 " trates having received information of what was intended,
 " and dismissed the men from custody, the mob dispersed
 " with three cheers, having been previously instructed by
 " their president to abstain from further tumult, and to ob-
 " serve a peaceable and orderly conduct.

" The authority of the civil Magistrate is in the mean
 " time entirely superseded; and until a proper force is sent
 " to protect them in the future execution of their duty,
 " which has been anxiously required by the Sheriff and Ma-
 " gistrates, they dare not proceed in the common course of
 " legal and judicial enquiry against any of the persons who
 " are suspected of being concerned in these violent and ra-
 " cious proceedings. But it cannot escape the observa-
 " tion of the committee, how accurately this intelligence
 " corresponds with and confirms the information yesterday
 " communicated, as to the state of the minds of these peo-
 " ple in that neighbourhood; the alarm which their leaders
 " feel as to the result of the legal enquiry at present de-
 " pending; and the regular systematic connection between
 " them and the leaders at Edinburgh, as discovered from the
 " yet unfinished and hasty examinations taken in that city.

" I have the honour to be,

" SIR,

" Your most obedient humble servant,

" HENRY DUNDAS."

" Right Honble. Mr. Pitt."

" SIR,

Whitehall, 27th May, 1794.

" I have this morning received further information from

" Scotland,

“ Scotland, which appears to me proper to be communi-
 “ cated to the Committee.

“ The persons in whose custody the weapons, formerly
 “ deposited, were found, appear to have acted for some time
 “ past under the name of a Committee of Ways and Means
 “ appointed by the British Convention, and to have been
 “ empowered by the various Societies throughout Scotland to
 “ direct all their future proceedings.—By means of Emis-
 “ saries privately dispatched to different parts of the country,
 “ this Committee has signified to, and prepared a number
 “ of the Societies for the approaching convention in England,
 “ many of whom have chosen, and all, as far as is yet
 “ known, agreed to choose delegates to attend it, and sub-
 “ scribe for their expenses.—The time and place of meeting
 “ was not divulged, and were to be communicated from E-
 “ dinburgh in proper time, by individuals to be sent from
 “ thence for that purpose, whose arrival was daily looked for
 “ by several of the different Societies.—One of the members
 “ of the late Convention at Edinburgh appears within this
 “ fortnight past to have been dispatched, and to have actual-
 “ ly performed an extensive tour through the west part of
 “ Scotland, to have visited in his progress the towns of
 “ Queensferry, Falkirk, Stirling, St. Mirren, Kilpith, Kirk-
 “ intulloch, Campsie, Glasgow, and Paisley; in all of which
 “ places he appears to have met with the principal persons
 “ concerned in these Societies; to have left with them, and
 “ the members of the Societies, copies of a circular letter
 “ from the committee of Edinburgh, and instructed them in
 “ what manner they were in future to carry on their cor-
 “ respondence; and to have suggested to them the propriety
 “ of furnishing themselves with arms, for the purpose of de-
 “ fence,

" since, under the pretence of defending themselves against
 " foreign troops *.—An attempt has been made to distribute
 " some of the weapons lately discovered at Edinburgh, by
 " means of persons privately dispatched to the country for
 " that purpose ; and which seems only to have failed in its
 " execution from the timidity of the person solicited to do
 " so.

" An individual of the same description has been taken in-
 " to custody in the country, who appears to have commil-
 " sioned, and actually received from England, some mus-
 " quets and bayonets. On being questioned by the proper
 " Magistrate, he has refused giving any explanation, farther
 " than that he commissioned them in the way of his business
 " —But it does not appear that he ever dealt in such articles
 " before; no person appears to have commissioned him to
 " procure any such ; and there seems to be full evidence of
 " his having solicited others to purchase what they of them-
 " selves were not thinking of, or wishing to provide.

" He admits having corresponded with the London Corre-
 " sponding Society on the subject of a convention, and that
 " the Society of which he is a leader had agreed to send dele-
 " gates to it, as soon as the time and place of meeting should
 " be divulged.

" A requisition has been made by the Magistrates and prin-
 " cipal inhabitants of Paisley, for a military force to protect
 " them in the execution of their duty, and in their persons
 " and properties ; which has been duly attended to.—It is
 " with much satisfaction I inform you, that the gentlemen of
 " estate and character, in the county of Renfrew, have re-
 " solutely

* Vide Appendix A. (No. 2.)

" hastily stepped forward, and determined to support the
 " authority of the civil magistrate.

" I have the honour to be,

" SIR,

" Your most obedient

" Humble servant,

" HENRY DUNDAS."

" Right Honble. Mr. Pitt."

" SIR,

Whitehall, 2d June, 1794.

" The information I have received this morning from Edin-
 " burgh enables me to state to the Committee that the transac-
 " tions communicated in my former letters are further clear-
 " ed up by the enquiries which have since taken place in that
 " city.

" Some of the persons who absconded on the first discov-
 " ery of the arms concealed in certain houses have been disco-
 " vered and apprehended; and the result of these further en-
 " quires confirms, in almost every particular, the account
 " received from other quarters, and the import of which I
 " have already laid before the Committee.—The establish-
 " ment of a Secret Committee at Edinburgh, invested with
 " full powers to direct the future operations of the societies
 " throughout Scotland; the regular correspondence privately
 " carried on by means of epistles dispatched to the different
 " towns; the ascertaining the exact number of persons in
 " these societies, who were directed to provide themselves
 " with arms, and to hold themselves in readiness for any
 " measure which the Secret Committee might in due time
 " communicate; are confirmed by every account and infor-
 " mation which the Magistrates have received. And an in-
 " dividual who has been lately taken into custody has con-
 " firmed the account received from a different quarter, of the
 " dangerous

" dangerous design planned by the Edinburgh Committee, of
 " effecting a general insurrection as soon as they were ready
 " and prepared for carrying it into execution, by the seizure
 " of the principal magistrates and officers of the law at mid-
 " night, and possessing themselves of the prisons and public
 " offices, as stated to you in my letter of the 23d May, and
 " then communicated through a different channel from that
 " through which the present confirmation of these circum-
 " stances has been received. The plan seems not only to
 " have been discussed and deliberated on by the magistrates
 " at Edinburgh, but to have proceeded a certain degree in its
 " steps towards actual execution, which appear to have been
 " conducted with the utmost caution; and there is reason to
 " believe, that the execution of the plan was not to be con-
 " fined to Edinburgh, but was meant to take place in some
 " of the most considerable towns in Scotland on a certain day,
 " and at one and the same time. The proper and usual steps
 " have been taken for bringing the offenders to trial; and
 " those against whom the information chiefly points are de-
 " tained in custody.

" I have the honour to be,

" SIR,

" Your most obedient humble servant,

Right Humble, Mr Pres.

" HENRY DUNDAS."

From what has been stated it appears, that the design of
 rising, as far as it has yet proceeded, has been conducted
 with great secrecy and caution, and at the same time with a
 remarkable degree of uniformity and concert in parts of the
 kingdom remote from each other. The weapons principally
 provided seem to have been peculiarly calculated for the pur-
 poses of sudden violence, and to have been chosen in con-
 formity to the example of what has recently passed in France.

The

The actual progress made in the execution of the design, during the short period of a few weeks, sufficiently shows what might have been expected, if the societies had proceeded, without interruption, in increasing the number of their members, and the fund for providing arms.

Your Committee will next proceed to lay before the House an account of various remarkable circumstances, which have appeared in the course of this investigation, and which furnish striking instances, either of the general principles on which the chief promoters of this plan have acted, or of specific measures which they had in contemplation, and which, from their nature and importance, deserve to be particularly noticed.

The general disposition of the persons engaged in these measures to applaud and promote the new political principles adopted in France, has been stated in the former Report, and will be more detailed in the sequel: But it seems proper to your Committee here to mention some of the letters of two of the most active members of the Corresponding Society, which shew their adherence to ~~the~~ cause of France in the present war; their conviction of the connection between that cause and their own objects; and their views even of availing themselves, if possible, of the assistance of the French arms in carrying their designs into execution.

In a letter from Hardy to the united societies at Norwich, dated the 17th October 1793, which is inserted in the Appendix, there is this remarkable passage*:—“ The rejoicings
“ for the capture of Valenciennes were not confined to Nor-
“ wich alone. The ignorant every where else throughout
“ the nation betrayed their imbecility on the occasion: But
“ the asking of a truce, the slaughter of thousands of
D human

* Appendix B. (No. 1.)

" human beings; the laying waste whole provinces, or the
 " enslaving a nation, (however great evils they may be), can
 " only, for a small space of time, retard the progress of truth
 " and reason. Be not discouraged therefore, pursue your plan,
 " instruct mankind, and constitutionally set your faces a-
 " gainst evil-doing whosoever: Be assured that many are our friends,
 " who only wait a favourable opportunity openly to join us,
 " while our enemies have much enfeebled themselves and
 " their cause by arbitrary exertions: Despotism is at its last
 " gasp! one or two more campaigns will terminate its exist-
 " ence." And in a subsequent letter from Margatot to the
 " united societies at Norwich, dated in March last, the senti-
 " ments expressed are still more striking *.—" This morning
 " ten ships of war have left Spithead for the channel, and it
 " is reported that the British fleet is out. Rumour, always
 " magnifying things, says there are seventy sail at sea; if so,
 " there may be a number of transports among them, and a DE-
 " SCENT MAY PROBABLY BE THE CONSEQUENCE.
 " For God's sake, my worthy friends, do not relax in the cause
 " of freedom—Continue as you have begun,—consolidate your own
 " societies,—unite with others,—persevere, and make no doubt
 " but sooner or later your endeavours will be crowned with suc-
 " cess." At the time of writing this letter, Margatot was no
 " longer in a situation to take a part in the proceedings of the
 " society, being then on board the vessel in which he was to be
 " transported. But it appears to your Committee, that these
 " expressions from him are of no small importance, considering
 " the share which he appears, by much concurrent evidence, to
 " have had, previous to his conviction, in directing the mea-
 " sures which were adopted; the vigorous apprehension and at-
 " tachment which those societies have shown him since that
 " date;

* Appendix B. (No. 1.)

date ; and above all, that these very sentiments are addressed to the united societies at Norwich, and that the mention of an expected descent from France is immediately followed by an exhortation to them to proceed, with fresh vigour, in the pursuit of their designs in this country.

The same spirit appears in a letter from the Secretary of the Corresponding Society in the month of January 1794* *See*
" Now is the time for us to do something worthy of men ; the
" brave defenders of Liberty south of the English Channel are per-
" forming wonders, driving their enemies before them like chaff
" before the windblown."

Your Committee place less reliance on accounts of words used in conversation than on evidence relating from written documents ; but they nevertheless think it proper to mention that it has been distinctly stated in evidence, that in the presence of two or three principal members of the Corresponding Society, a person (whose name was mentioned) used the expression, speaking of the French, that a victory of theirs in Flanders was as useful to the cause as a victory in St. George's Fields ; and the same person appears to have held a conversation with these members of the society, relative to the advantage which would be derived if the French could land 5,000 men in this country, to join those who should rise here.

Another leading circumstance has appeared to your Committee, which, however inefficual it has naturally proved, furnishes a strong collateral proof of the extent of the views entertained, and that no means however criminal, were neglected for promoting them. The circumstance referred to, is a design, which has been the frequent subject of conversation among some members of the Corresponding Society, of endeavouring to seduce the army from their duty, and the

actual

* Appendix B. (No. 1.)

usual employment of artificers to tamper with the soldiers. In conformity with these views, it has also appeared, that it was intended to prepare an address to the army; and a paper has been discovered in Scotland, which has been already referred to, the object of which was to endeavour to excite disaffection in the fencible regiments in that part of the kingdom, and which has actually been circulated with much industry among the soldiers of that description.

Various other schemes of the most daring and criminal nature are also stated, on the evidence of persons who were present, to have been at different times the subject of conversation among persons, the greatest part of whom were members of this Society. It even appears, that a project has been particularly and repeatedly agitated among them, of striking a sudden blow, and beginning by securing the Royal Family, and the Members of both Houses of Parliament, with the hope (as it was expressed) " that the army, being without leaders, " would no longer oppose their attempts." Particular individuals have been pointed out in these conversations, as objects of personal vengeance for their public conduct. Evidence has been given of discourses held concerning the release of the delegates of the Scotch Convention, while on board the transport in the river. An attack on Newgate was meditated, according to a particular plan referred to in the conversation, with the view of releasing the prisoners. A similar conversation was held with respect to an attack on the Tower; and in the letter from the Secretary of State, which has been inserted in a former part of the Report, it appears that there is direct evidence of a plan regularly concerted at Edinburgh, for seizing, at an appointed time, all the public offices in that city, the banks, and the principal members of the courts of justice; and for making a similar attempt (in consequence of a secret concert among the members of the Societies in different places)

at

at one and the same time, in some of the most considerable towns in Scotland.

Your committee do not state the various circumstances which have been enumerated in this part of the Report, as shewing that these extensive projects, as far as relates to England, were as yet regularly digested, or in sufficient forwardness for actual execution; but the evidence before them gives them every reason to believe that these views have been deliberately considered, and made the repeated subject of conversation; and they cannot but consider them as strong indications of the principles and intentions of the parties concerned, and of the nature of the measures which might have been expected if they had proceeded, without interruption, in increasing their numbers, and in providing arms in the different modes already stated.

There remains another circumstance which, however, as far as it has yet been investigated, is traced distinctly only to two individuals, both of whom were members of the Corresponding Society, and principally concerned in some of their most remarkable transactions: Whether any other members of the society were or were not acquainted with it, has not appeared to your committee. Three copies have been produced to your committee (in all material parts conformable to each other) of a paper which purports to be a draft of resolutions intended to be proposed at the meeting which took place at Chalk Farm on the 14th of April 1794. From the blank left for the place of meeting, it seems probable that it was prepared before that place was fixed upon: The resolutions are different from those which passed at the meeting, and there is no reason to believe that they were in fact proposed there; but distinct evidence has been given of the hand writing being that of the person in whose possession one the copies was found, who is also proved to have shown them as the resolutions which he intended

intended should be proposed at the meeting; and the two other copies were found among the papers of one of the most active members of the Society, who appears, previous to the meeting at Chalk Farm, to have been appointed, in conjunction with some others, to arrange the measures to be adopted, and at whose suggestion (subsequent to that appointment) the meeting is stated to have been postponed beyond the time originally proposed, because (as he is said to have expressed) more time was necessary to make known the sentiments of the Society in bold and serene resolutions. Your Committee think it right here to insert the paper itself, on which they will forbear to make any comment.

" At a general meeting of the London Corresponding Society,
 " held at — on Monday the 14th day of April, 1794—

" Citizen ——— in the Chair,

" Resolved, that all sovereign, legislative, and judicial
 " powers are the rights of the people; and though the people
 " have delegated these their original powers to others, in trust,
 " for the benefit of the community, yet the rights themselves
 " are reserved by the people, and cannot be absolutely parted
 " with by the people to those persons who are employed to
 " conduct the business of the state.

" Resolved, that the constitution of England is held by the
 " King, Lords, and Commons, and other officers appointed
 " by the people, in trust, for the benefit of the people; and
 " though these trustees may regulate and improve the consti-
 " tution, yet they cannot alter or subvert it without commit-
 " ting treason against the nation.

" Resolved, that *Magna Charta*, or THE GREAT CHAR-
 " TER OF THE LIBERTIES OF ENGLAND, made in
 " the

" the Reign of King John; THE PETITION OF RIGHTS,
 " assented to by Parliament in the Reign of King Charles the
 " 1st; and the several laws made at and in consequence of
 " the Glorious Revolution in the year 1688, are declaratory of
 " those parts of the Constitution of England, which are in and
 " by them respectively declared.

" Resolved, that the office of KING of England was not
 " instituted by the people merely as an office of profit and
 " honour to the King, but he was so appointed as chief trust-
 " see and guardian of the constitution and rights of the peo-
 " ple; and that important and laborious personal duties are
 " annexed to the regal office, the objects of which are, to
 " promote the good of the people, and preserve their rights
 " in full vigour from innovation and corruption.

" Resolved, that it is the duty of the King to preserve the
 " Constitution of England and the rights of the people against
 " every encroachment; and, in order to enforce that duty,
 " the following oath is required to be taken by every King on
 " his accession to the throne of Great Britain; to wit: The
 " Archbishop or bishop shall say—Will you solemnly promise
 " and swear to govern the people of this kingdom of England,
 " and the dominions thereto belonging, according to the sta-
 " tutes in parliament agreed on, and the laws and customs of
 " the same?"

" The King or Queen shall say, " I solemnly promise so to
 " do." Archbishop or bishop—" Will you to your power cause
 " law and justice to meet; to be executed in all your judg-
 " ments?"—Ans. " I will."

" After this, the King or Queen, laying his or her hand
 " on the Holy Gospels, shall say—" The things which I have
 " before promised I will perform and keep; so help me God."
 " —and then shall kiss the book.

" Resolved, that his present Majesty King George the
 " third,

" third, ' do his offices to the throne of these realms, did
" solemnly take the said oath.

" Resolved, That the constitutional rights of the people
" have been violated, and that it is the duty of the people,
" in the present alarming crisis, to ascribe and enquire into
" the innovations or infringements which have been made
" upon the rights of the people, and how far the declarations
" of the constitution, as they were settled at the forcible Re-
" volution, remain in force, and which of them have been
" violated, and by whom; and also whether such innova-
" tions, infringements, and violations, have been committed
" from the negligence or corruption of those who have been
" intrusted with the government of the state.

" Resolved, That this society do invite the people to meet
" in their respective neighbourhoods, to elect one or more
" person or persons as delegates to meet in a convention; to
" be held on the day of next, at such place as
" shall be appointed by the secret committee of this society;
" and that the delegates so elected do forthwith transmit to
" the secretary of this society, No. 9. Piccadilly, London,
" the vouchers of their several elections, in order that the
" place of meeting may be duly notified to them.

" Resolved, That it is the right and the bounden duty of
" the people to punish all traitors against the nation, and
" that the following words are now not a part of the oath of
" allegiance; to wit, " I declare that it is not lawful, upon
" any pretence whatever, to take arms against the King."

Before the Committee quit this part of the subject, they
think it not immaterial to take some notice of the different
means used to disseminate such principles as have been stated
through the lower orders of society, and to familiarise their
minds, by every possible artifice, to such ideas as might pre-
pare them to be the instruments of the most dangerous and
desperate

despotic design. Some of these means may at first sight be considered as too trivial to be mentioned on an occasion of this importance; but they appear to your Committee in a very different light, when they recollect that an essential part of such a plan as has been in agitation was to seduce and corrupt the thoughtless and uninformed, and to make use of the channels of communication best adapted to this purpose. The appearance of insignificance and levity, which belongs at first sight to this part of the system, is, in truth, only an additional proof of the art and industry with which it has been pursued. The measures employed for this purpose appear to have been deliberately prepared, and every contrivance used to mix them (in the shape most likely to capture attention) with the ordinary occupations or amusements of those on whom they were intended to operate. Accordingly lectures have been delivered on political subjects, calculated from their very extravagance to catch the attention of the audience, and in the course of them every topic has been employed that could inflame their minds, alienate them from the laws and constitution of their country, and habituate them to principles of sedition and rebellion. The most violent publications to the same effect have been issued, but generally, circulated in hand bills, both in the metropolis and in the remote parts of the country. Every point that could excite discontent, according to the passions, interests, or prejudices of different classes, has been successively dwelt on, and always in such a manner as to connect it with the leading design. The attempt to accomplish this end has appeared in the shape even of play bills and songs; seditious songs; and a studied selection of the tunes which have been most in use in France since the Revolution, have been applied to the same purpose, of endeavouring to render deliberate insouciance to every species of treason familiar to the minds of the people.

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Having

HAVING thus stated the points which the Committee have thought it material separately to lay before the House, they will now proceed to those particulars which will give a full and distinct view of the rise, progress, and nature of the general design with which the facts already stated are essentially connected; for this purpose your Committee will state in their Report the points which appear most worthy of attention, inserting in the appendix a more particular statement of the several proceedings to which they refer. In doing this it will be necessary to advert to transactions, some of which took place at an early period, and have already attracted observation; but which it is nevertheless material to insert in the order in which they took place, because they are highly important in explaining more recent proceedings, and giving a connected view of the whole system.

The period from which it appears to your Committee material to trace in this view the proceedings of the Society for Constitutional Information, is that of the publication of the pamphlet so well known under the title of "Rights of Man," by Thomas Paine."

Your Committee have already referred, in their former Report, to the approbation given by the Society to this work; and this is one of the points on which they should not think it necessary now to dwell, if they did not feel it essential to the object before stated, of developing the rise and progress of the system which they are tracing, to call the attention of the House to the leading features of a work thus approved and recommended, in order to compare it with subsequent transactions of which it may be considered as the foundation.

In this pamphlet, published in the year 1791, the National Assembly of France was represented as occupied in establishing a constitution founded on the rights of man, and the au-
thority

Liberty of the people, the only authority on which [it was stated] government had a right to exist in any country; monarchy and hereditary succession were treated as absurdities; the Revolution of 1688, and the succession of the House of Hanover, were also made the subject of ridicule; and a distinction was drawn between two modes of government, which were stated to prevail in the world: First, Government by election and representation; and, secondly, Government by hereditary succession. The former generally known by the name of Republic, the latter by that of Monarchy and Aristocracy. On the 23d March 1791, the society resolved, "That the thanks" of the society should be given to Mr. Thomas Paine, in "the terms expressed in the copy of their resolution of this" "day," inserted in the Appendix *. A continuation of Paine's book, intitled "Rights of Man, part second, concerning principle and practice," was published early in 1792, in which the principles of the British Constitution were again attacked; the principles on which the French Constitution, accepted by the King in 1791, had been established, were approved, with an exception of the hereditary succession to the Crown: This pamphlet, recommending the overthrow of the British Constitution, and the establishment of a democratical senate, as the sole legislative and executive power of the state, was also circulated with great industry; and the Society for Constitutional Information, on the 16th of March 1792, expressed their approbation of the work, in answer to a letter from the Manchester Constitutional Society, containing the thanks of that society to Mr. Paine †. On the 23d of March, 1792, the Constitutional Society at Sheffield applied to the

London

* Appendix C. 23 Mar. 1791.

† Appendix C. 26 Mar. 1791.

London Society, that twelve of their members might be admitted as associated members of the London Society *; and there appears in the books of the London Society a printed paper of the Sheffield-Society, in which that society declares, that the practice as well as the principle of government was laid down in the works intitled "Rights of Man, Part the First, and Second," in a manner *so clear and irresistably convincing*, that the society resolved to give their thanks to Mr. Paine for these publications.

Other entries, expressive of approbation of the same works, and of other seditious publications, frequently appear in the same books during the course of the year 1792 †.

In Easter term, 1792, an information was filed in the Court of King's Bench, by the King's Attorney-General, against Thomas Paine, for writing and publishing the last pamphlet, on which he was convicted in December 1792. During this prosecution another pamphlet was published, under the title of "An Address to the Addressers on the late Proclamation, by Thomas Paine." This pamphlet, after stating that "two revolutions had taken place, those of America and France," added, "both of them have rejected the *monarchical and aristocratical system of the English government*." "America has declared against all hereditary government, and established the representative system of government only; France has entirely rejected the aristocratical part, and is now discovering the absurdity of the monarchical, and is approaching fast to the *representative system*." The pamphlet then treats monarchy, and every species of hereditary government, as a *burden and imposition* ‡; asserts "for a na-
tion

* Appendix C. 23 Mar. 1792.

† Appendix C. 1792.

‡ Vide Appendix.

" tion to be free it is sufficient that she wills it * ;" treats the reform of Parliament by Parliament itself as absurd ; denies the power of Parliament to reform any part of the Constitution ; asserts that it is not a subject cognizable before Parliament, and that the right, and the exercise of that right, appertains to the nation only, and that the proper means is by a national convention, elected for the purpose by all the people † ; that such a body, empowered and supported by the nation, would have authority to demand information upon all matters necessary to be enquired into, and the nation would decree its own reforms. The pamphlet then states that the plan and organization of a convention was early (in practice ‡), and proceeds to shew the manner in which, supposing the inhabitants of England to be seven millions, a convention of 1,000 members might be elected in an orderly manner § ; adding, that " a convention of 1,000 persons fairly elected, would bring every matter to a decided issue. ¶ " This latter pamphlet was not made the subject of any express resolutions of the Society, but during the prosecution of Mr Paine for the former work, the Society for Constitutional Information entered into a subscription to defray his expenses, and encouraged the like support from other societies, as appears by several entries in the books of the Society ¶. And this mark of their approbation of his principles having been continued after the publication last mentioned, seems to afford a full proof that this circumstance had made no change in the sentiments of the Society towards him.

The

* Vide Appendix.

† Vide Appendix.

‡ Vide Appendix.

§ Vide Appendix.

¶ Vide Appendix.

¶ Appendix C. 1791.

The principles laid down in these publications appearing thus to be approved and sanctioned by the society, will be found to be gradually and successfully adopted and acted upon in their proceedings *. On the 30th March 1832, the London Corresponding Society sent to the Society for Constitutional Information several resolutions, among which were the following :

- “ That every individual has a right to share in the go-
“ vernment of that society of which he is a member, unless
“ incapacitated.
“ That nothing but non age, a privation of reason, or
“ an offence against the general rules of society, can inco-
“ pacitate him.”

These Resolutions, containing the principle of Universal Suffrage, were adopted without reserve, and with strong expressions of approbation, by the Constitutional Society.

On the 20th of April following, a declaration from a society in Southwark appears entered in the books of the Constitutional Society, with their thanks for the communication. This declaration expresses more fully the grounds on which the societies intended to proceed, adopting many important principles which had been made the foundation of the French revolution, in the following terms :

- “ That all civil and political authority is derived from
“ the people.
“ That equal active citizenship is the unalienable right
“ of all men, minors, criminals, and insane persons ex-
“ cepted.
“ That the exercising of that right, in appointing an ad-
“ quate

* Appendix C. 20 Mar. 1792.

† Appendix C. 20th Apr. 1792.

" *equite Representative Government*, is the wisest device of
 " human policy, and the only security of national freedom."

The resolutions of the Sheffield Society having suggested universal suffrage, and the Southwark Society having added the general idea of a *Representative Government*, a Society, called The Norwich Revolution Society, on the 18th of April 1792, sent a letter to the Constitutional Society, entered in the minutes of their proceedings on the 4th of May 1792, in which there is this passage* : " This Society is willing to hope
 " the redress of every existing grievance at the hands of a ge-
 " neral assembly resulting from an extraordinary convocation, in
 " 1688, of all who had at any preceding time been elected re-
 " presentatives of the people, assisted by the hereditary coun-
 " cillors of the nation, and a peculiar disputation from the me-
 " tropolis, which national consulting assembly calleded for mil-
 " conduct a king of the house of Stuart."

It seems evidently to be the intention of this passage to re-
 present the Revolution of 1688 as a precedent for a *national
 consulting assembly*, and to shelter under that authority the
 indirect recommendation of the proceedings and terms which
 have recently been adopted in France.

This communication, with others from different societies
 at Norwich, were followed by a resolution, expressing that
 the Society for Constitutional Information approved them with
bon-fais satisfaction †, and desired earnestly to concur and
 co-operate with these societies in their laudable objects.

They also elected twelve members of the Norwich Society
 affiliated members of their own society.

And they added a resolution, that a committee should be
 appointed

* Appendix C. 4th May 1792.

† Appendix C. 4th May 1792.

appointed to consider whether any and what communication should be made, and by what means, by the society, with the Society of Friends of the Constitution at Paris.

It appears by entries of the 11th May 1791^{*}, that "the Society of the Friends of the Constitution at Paris," mentioned in the former resolution, were the Jacobin Club there; and on the same day[†] it was resolved that there should be a communication with that club; and an address was read and agreed to, and ordered to be signed by the chairman, and transmitted to Paris.

Towards the close of the same year, and some time subsequent to the resolution of the 10th of August, which finally destroyed all traces of monarchy in France, the society resolved to address the National Convention, which was then invested with the whole legislative and executive government, and was assembled for the purpose of forming a new constitution, and proceeding to the trial of the king. This paper is conceived in terms which leave no room to doubt of the views of those who framed it †. The address titles the Convention "*Servants of a Sovereign People, and Benefactors of Mankind.*" It rejoices that the Revolution in France had arrived at that point of perfection which enabled the Society to address the Convention by that title; and it declares that it is the only title that can accord with the character of true legislators: It speaks of the proceedings of the 10th of August as a glorious victory, which had finally prepared the way for a constitution, which the Society trusted the Convention would establish on the basis of reason and nature. It represents the proceedings of the Convention as labours in the work of human happiness, and adds, "THE BENEFIT WILL IN PART BE OURS, but the glory will be all your own; and it is the reward of your

"perseverance;

* Appendix C. 11th May 1791.

† Appendix C. 9th Nov. 1791.

"perseverance; it is the prize of virtue." Then drawing a comparison between the state of liberty in England, America, and France, it not only gives a decided preference to the American republic over the British monarchy, but treats the splendor of the French Revolution as the object of the highest admiration.

This address was ordered to be presented by two of the members of the Society at the bar of the National Convention, and it was presented accordingly.

But the terms of this address are not the only evidence on this head *. An address, framed a short time before by the London Corresponding Society, which had been communicated to the Constitutional Society, and had received their express approbation, and which was presented likewise to the French Convention, contained passages clearly expressing the same intent, and suggesting the idea of a triple alliance (not of, *steves*, but) of the people of America, France, and Britain, to give freedom to Europe, and peace to whole world.

These transactions are rendered still more remarkable by the verbal address of the deputies at the time of presenting the address of the Society, and by the answer of the president, which they translated. The letters of the deputies to the Society have been found among the papers of that Society, together with a copy of the address of the deputies, and the answer of the president. In the first, after pointing out their wishes to effect in their own country a revolution similar to that made in France, the deputies consider the example of France as having made *revolutionary* copy, and add, that it would not be extraordinary if, in a short space of time, the French should send addresses of congratulation to a National Convention of England; and the president in his answer says, "The

F

" moment

* Appendix C, 2nd Ed. 1794

" among, without doubt approaches when the French will
 " bring congratulations to the National Convention of Great
 " Britain."

On the 7th of December 1793, the letter of the deputies* was read in the Society, as appears by an entry in their books.

In January 1793, Barrère, Roland, and St. André were elected (as has been mentioned in the former Report) honorary members; and on the 1st February, the speeches of Barrère and St. André were ordered to be entered on the books of the Society, and this resolution ordered to be printed in the news-papers, which it actually was on the 5th of February 1793†.

The circumstance of the time at which this marked approbation was publicly given to leading members of the National Convention of France, would render this measure of itself a strong indication of the views of the society, and as such it was referred to by the Committee in their former Report.

But on more particular reference to the speeches themselves which were thus recommended to public notice, this translation will be found to be of much more importance; it is not barely an approbation of leading persons professing principles, and pursuing measures, hostile to the general interests of the country: The speeches were delivered for the express purpose of accelerating the condemnation and execution of the French king. The doctrines contained in them directly relate to the precise object of a National Convention, and to the question of the personal responsibility of sovereigns; they contain a statement of the rights, duties, and functions of such an assembly; which cannot be supposed to have been recommended to the public attention for any other possible purpose than

* Appendix C.

† Appendix C. 18 & 19 Jan. & 1 Feb. 1793.

than that of laying the foundation of a similar proceeding in this country, and that with the direct intention of employing it for the destruction of the sovereignty, and the utter subversion of the constitution. This conclusion will be fully justified by an extract from the speeches in question, which are expressed in terms so remarkable, that the Committee cannot too strongly recommend them to the attention of the House.

The following passage is extracted from St. André's speech.

" Your right to decide the fate of the King arises from
" your being a Revolutionary Assembly created by the nation
" in a state of insurrection."

Barrere's speech is much more full and more systematically reasoned; it is divided into several heads, from which the following extracts are taken.

" This proceeding (speaking of the trial of the king) is of
" the highest importance to public order, absolutely necessa-
" ry to the existence of liberty, and connected with what-
" ever is held most sacred by the nation. From the calmness
" and temper which have distinguished the deliberations of
" the Convention on this occasion, it may be foreseen that
" justice and reason will direct its ultimate sentence. His-
" tory will record the striking contrast between kings, who in
" the midst of the dissipation of courts sign prosecutions and
" death warrants for the destruction of thousands of citizens,
" and the representatives of the people, who deliberate with
" wisdom and caution on the punishment of a single despot.

⁴² "It is the destiny of kings to be the occasion of the calamities of the people, whether they remain on their thrones, or whether they are precipitated from them."

PART

* P A R T II,

* *Whether the Person of the King be inviolable.*

* The people of Paris, by making an holy insurrection
 * against the king on the 20th of August, deprived him of his
 * character of inviolability. The people of the other depart-
 * ments applauded this insurrection, and adopted the conse-
 * quence of it. The people have therefore formally inter-
 * posed to destroy this royal inviolability. The tacit consent
 * of the people rendered the person of the king inviolable.
 * The act of insurrection was a tacit repeal of that consent,
 * and was founded on the same grounds of law as the consent
 * itself.—The king's person is inviolable only with relation
 * to the other branches of the legislature, but not with rela-
 * tion to the people.*

* P A R T III.

* *Whether an Appeal shall be made to the People?*

* The people is the Sovereign.

* A Convention differs from an ordinary legislature in this
 * respect.—A legislature is only a species of superintending
 * magistracy, a moderator of the powers of government.—A
 * Convention is a perfect representation of the sovereign.—
 * The members of the legislative assembly acted in August upon
 * these principles.—In summoning the convention they de-
 * clared, that they saw but one measure which could free
 * France;

" France; namely, to have recourse to the supreme will of
 " the people, and to invite the people to exercise immediate-
 " ly that inalienable right of sovereignty which the constitu-
 " tion had acknowledged, and which it could not subject to
 " any restriction. The public interest required that the people
 " should manifest their will by the election of a National Con-
 " vention, formed of representatives invested by the people
 " with unlimited powers.—The people did manifest their will
 " by the election of that Convention.—The Convention being
 " assembled, is itself that sovereign will which ought to pre-
 " vail.—It would be contrary to every principle, to suppose
 " that the Convention is not alone exclusively the expression
 " of the general will.

" The powers of the Convention must, from the very na-
 " ture of the assembly, be unlimited with respect to every
 " measure of general safety, such as the execution of a tyrant.
 " —It is no longer a Convention if it has not power to judge
 " the King.

" A Convention is a constituent body, i. e. a body that is
 " to make a constitution for the people.—A legislature makes
 " laws under an established constitution, and in conformity
 " to it. It is despotism when in the ordinary and permanent
 " establishment of a state there is no separation of powers;
 " but it is of the very essence of a constituent body to con-
 " center for the time all authority.—It is the very nature of
 " a National Convention to be the temporary image of the
 " nation, to unite in itself all the powers of the state, to em-
 " ploy them against the enemies of liberty, and to distribute
 " them in a new total compact called a Constitution.

" Behold that constituent assembly which laid the first founda-
 " tions of your liberty ! Behold that revolutionary genius !
 " which broke through every impediment, exceeded its de-
 " legated authority, created its own powers according to the
 " exigencies

" exigencies of liberty, and to the occasional wants of the
 " people, destroyed all prejudices by the force of that public
 " opinion to which it gave birth, obliterated all privileges,
 " abolished all the parliaments, changed the form and tenure
 " of all property, as well as the measure and sign of all value,
 " and made a projected King its prisoner ! Nothing was want-
 " ing to immortalize that assembly, but to have delivered
 " France from the calamity of Kingly Government, and to
 " have relieved you from the duty of judging the left of your
 " Kings.

" With this example before your eyes, you hesitate even
 " in the first step of your duty.—Am I then no longer in the
 " midst of that National Convention, whose honorable mission
 " it was to destroy Kings and Regacy ?"

Have you then traced the proceedings of the Society for Con-
 ditional Information to the period when the commencement of
 the war with France necessarily interrupted the development
 of their principles and designs by their correspondence with
 that country, your conscience will now lay before the House
 such particulars as relate to their proceedings at home, in con-
 sult with the London Corresponding Society, and with the
 several societies in different parts of the country, during the
 same period.

From thence it will appear.—That not only the London Cor-
 responding Society, but all the principal societies in the coun-
 try, have been regulated under the immediate auspices of the
 Society for Conditional Information, and here, both in their
 origin and progress, looked up to that society for their guidance
 and direction in the pursuit of their common object :

That particularly since the institution of the Corresponding
 Society, which appears from a very early period to have had an
 intimate connection with the Society for Conditional Infor-
 mation,

method, a system of General Correspondence has been established, by means of which the principles of that Society (such as they have been already stated) have been widely diffused and disseminated through the country :

That throughout the whole of this extensive correspondence, the strongest marks appear of an almost universal agreement and co-operation among the country Societies, not only in the general principles to which your Committee has already referred, but also in the nature and frame of the Societies, in the system of concert and delegation, and in the particular object of forming a national convention for the purpose of carrying their principles into full effect; and that traces of this design are to be found in a greater or less degree at a very early period of this correspondence.

The London Corresponding Society was instituted in January 1792. A general account of the plan according to which it was formed and distributed into different divisions, has already been given in the last Report, and a list of the number of divisions, which had been gradually established, has been found among the papers in the possession of the Secretary.

In one of the first communications from the London Corresponding Society to the Society for Constitutional Information*, they state that "The delegates of the Corresponding Society think it their duty to acquaint the Constitutional Society, without delay, of the subscription begun amongst several of their divisions for the defence of the prosecution said to be commenced against that worthy member of the Constitutional Society, Mr. Thomas Paine, in consequence of his valuable publication, intitled "The Rights of Man;" and that they had no doubt that a numerous body would be found to follow an example, so just in itself, and

" to

* Appendix D. 14 Mar. 1792.

" so effluential to the support of that small portion of liberty
 " which the people of England are still supposed to enjoy.
 " That the approbation and encouragement which their fre-
 " ble endeavours had met with from the Constitutional So-
 " ciety, made them desirous of uniting more strongly and
 " more immediately with that society, and for this purpose
 " they wished that six of their members might be admitted
 " into the Constitutional Society, after the manner of those
 " received from the societies at Sheffield and Norwich.*

The London Corresponding Society signify that they are
 highly favoured by the readiness of the Constitutional Society
 to admit six of their members †, and that their sense of the fa-
 vour so conferred will be best expressed by their close atten-
 dance at the instructive meetings of the Constitutional Socie-
 ty, and by their constant endeavours to forward the so bene-
 ficial, and so much wanted reform of parliamentary representa-
 tion.

The following series of extracts is taken from the corre-
 spondence, both of the Society for Constitutional Information
 and of the London Corresponding Society, with the several
 societies instituted in the country ‡.

The first is a letter from Sheffield to the secretary of the
 Constitutional Society, dated 19th January 1792 †, desiring that
 the society established at Sheffield humbly solicits the advice
 and assistance of the Constitutional Society for the purpose of
 forming a connection with all similar societies in England; and
 adds, that information of the methods, means, and manner
 of application for the above purpose, as likewise the admission
 of one of their members into the Constitutional Society, will
 be

* London Corresponding Society, 8 July, 1791.

† Appendix D.

‡ Sheffield, 15 Jan. 1792.

be esteemed a particular favour, and gratefully acknowledged. In the postscript to the letter, an account is given of the origin of the Sheffield Society; and it is stated, that it at first originated in an assembly of five or six mechanics, who, from conversation about the enormous high price of provisions, the unbounded authority of the monopolists of all ranks, from the king to the peasant, and the waste of the public property by placemen, pensioners, luxury, and debauchery, together with the mock representation of the people, concluded that nothing but ignorance in the people could suffer the natural rights of every free man to be thus violated. They formed a society, which was gradually increasing, and divided into separate bodies. They re-published Paine's Rights of Man at the low price of 6d. each copy, to which they proposed to insert an abstract of the noted insidious corn bill of last year.

The same society at Sheffield *, in a letter to the Constitutional Society, mention that their numbers increase, for that most of the towns and villages in the neighbourhood are forming themselves into similar associations, and strictly adhere to the mode of copying the Sheffield society. They return thanks for the kind communications which they have received from the principal members of the Constitutional Society; and they enclose a parcel for the secretary of the London Corresponding Society, in answer to a letter of his, by which he had informed them, that there were in London a number of mechanics, shoemakers, &c. forming themselves into a society, on the broad basis of the Rights of Man, and desiring to know the manner of conducting this business at Sheffield: In answer to which, the Sheffield Society had given them their manner of proceeding, and hoped it might be of some use, as the improvement they were about to adopt

* Sheffield, 14 March 1794.

was certainly the best for managing large bodies in great and populous towns, viz. dividing them into small bodies or meetings of ten persons each, and these ten persons to appoint a delegate; ten of these delegates to form another meeting; and so on, delegating from one to another, till at last they are reduced to a proper number for constituting the committee or grand council.

The society at Sheffield express their determination to obtain a radical reform of the country, as soon as prudence and discretion will permit, and is *gladly* it *appears* that *system* which is consistent with the Rights of Man*, for these reasons, they request, that certain members of their society may be admitted into the Constitutional Society, in order that the society at Sheffield may be strengthened, and enabled to extend useful knowledge from town to village, and from village to town, until the whole nation be sufficiently enlightened and united in the same cause; which, they say, cannot fail of being the case, wherever the most excellent works of Mr. Thomas Paine find residence.

The Constitutional Society at Manchester transmit copy of their resolution to the Constitutional Society in London†, in which they resolve that their thanks are due to Mr. Thomas Paine, for the publication of the second part of the Rights of Man, containing principle and practice: They state it is a work of the highest importance to every nation under Heaven, but particularly to this: They express their hope, that in consequence of the effect of this work a complete reform in the present inadequate state of the representation of the people will be accomplished; and that the other great plans of public benefit which Mr. Paine has so powerfully recommended will speedily be carried into effect.

The

* Sheffield, 14th March 1792.

† Manchester, 15th March 1792.

The delegates of the united Constitutional Societies at Norwich communicate to the London Society for Constitutional Information a number of resolutions*, in which they express their happiness at the admission of the delegation from Sheffield, in order to form a plan of general information: They humbly beg to be admitted to the same favour, and express *their wish that all the societies of a similar kind in England were strongly and indissolubly united in one political body*: They return their thanks to Mr. Thomas Paine, for his first and second parts of the Rights of Man: They sincerely wish that he may see his labours crowned with success in the general diffusion of liberty and happiness among mankind: They signify that their numbers are increasing; and they earnestly interest all their brethren to increase their subscriptions, in order to *form one grand extensive union of all the friends of general liberty*.

In a letter to the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society †, the Society at Stockport return thanks to the Corresponding Society for the kindness, which they say will be useful in the formation of the infant society at that place; that they stand much in need of their experience in this particular. They state that they have carefully perused the Addresses, of which a parcel has been sent them by the London Corresponding Society; and observe on their contents in general, that the sentiments hardly rise to that height which they expected from men sensible of their full claims to absolute and uncontrollable liberty, *i. e. uncontrollable by any power which they have not immediately constituted and appointed*. They further state, that these are their sentiments, whatever be those of the London Corresponding Society, though in the present state of political knowledge

* Norwich, 14th March 1792.

† Stockport, 27th Sept. 1792.

knowledge it may be prudent not to avow them openly; they desire to be informed of the means of accomplishing their common object; and they conclude with the following words:

"We observe our expedition, which Gays, numerous other reforms would undoubtedly take place, &c. &c.

"But we ask, How is that Parliament to be chosen? Can we expect it from the present order of things? *Would not the real be done away at once by the People assembled in convention?*—Does it appear probable that the odious laws of which we complain will be abolished by any other way? Can the *principles arising from arbitrary be redressed, while the ——— retains its present authority in the legislature?* Is the universal right of conscience ever to be attacked, while the B. maintains *their seat on the ———?*

"Your thoughts on these important points, we most earnestly desire may be transmitted as soon as possible, not directed to the left, as we fear it will excite suspicion."

"(Signed)

"—————"

A letter from Marguerot (the President) to the Friends of Universal Peace and the Rights of Man, at Stockholm, says, "With regard to the publications of the London Corresponding Society, they are expressed in as strong terms as prudence will permit, yet plainly enough to convince the public, that while we expect every thing from an honest and annual parliament, nothing short of such a senate, chosen by the whole nation, will satisfy us."¹—The letter proceeds to state an intention of countenancing the struggle of the French nation against despotism and slavery, by addressing the French National Convention.

A

¹ London Corresponding Society, 11th Oct. 1794.

A copy of the Address is inclosed, and a concurrence of the Stockport Society is foliowed. The letter concludes thus: If,
 “ on the contrary you disapprove of that mark of zeal towards
 “ the only nation that has hitherto undertaken to restore man-
 “ kind to their just rights, please to communicate to us
 “ your objections.”

A letter from the editors of *The Patriot*, to the secretary of the London Corresponding Society, expresses their commendation of the laudable spirit which has induced the London Corresponding Society to address the Convention of France; states the encouragement which they had given to the society at Stockport; and exhorts the London Corresponding Society also to give it their sanction, advice, and support; announces that several societies have been formed within the last three weeks at Edinburgh, and that they had received some most spirited communications from thence. The letter concludes: We
 “ clearly foresee that Scotland will soon take the lead of this
 “ country, and conceive it will be necessary to take the greatest
 “ care that an universal communication should be constantly
 “ kept up between the several societies, however distant, and
 “ that all should determine to act upon the same principle, as
 “ near as may be, in a regular and active union. It was by
 “ this method that France became so thoroughly united, and
 “ we ought never to lose sight of it *.”

A letter from the secretary of the Society at Stockport, to the secretary of the London Corresponding Society, has these terms:

“ I am directed by the *Friends of Universal Peace and
 “ the Rights of Man*, to inform you that we received 150
 “ letters

* Sheffield, 15th Oct. 1794.

" letters from you, the first, dated September 21, requesting
 " us to concert with you in transmitting to the French Na-
 " tional Convention in address signed by every member, &c.

" With respect to the *substance* of this letter, we believe
 " that the *sense* of the French is that of every individual per-
 " son in Europe that is not fattening on plunder, or through ig-
 " norance, obstinacy, and intention, sit unconcerned, and
 " will not be persuaded to consider, although inevitable ruin
 " should be the awful consequence.

" We therefore think it highly necessary to add our friendly
 " aid and assistance, in order to stimulate the oppressed friends of
 " freedom in France against all the despots in Europe (who are
 " combined against the just and equal rights of man) by assuring
 " them that we view their signal exertions and wonderful with-
 " ings with admiration, together with the *crimes* of treache-
 " ry, rapacity, and the reflecting to every individual his equal and
 " inalienable rights, as fellow men and free citizens, and that
 " our hearts are united with theirs in our common cause, con-
 " sidering in a great measure their victory our emancipation, to-
 " gether with their own.

" Yet should it ever be the case that our ministry should
 " be so perfidious as, contrary to their pledged faith of neutrality,
 " to join the execrable band of despots against the *rights of free-
 " dom*, we will stand forward even to the hazarding of our
 " lives, by using every justifiable means to counteract their
 " machinations, and give to the friends of freedom all the en-
 " couragement and support which we severally unsupported
 " can afford *."

A letter to the Secretary of the London Society for Consti-
 tutional Information, states, that the people of Leicester are to
 have their last adjourned meeting in a few days, and that
 they

* Stockholm, 3d Nov. 1792.

Country solicits the London Society for Constitutional Information to transmit a plan of the Sheffield, or any other society which they may think best adapted to produce the end of establishing a constitutional society at Coventry *.

When the London Corresponding Society found that their conduct began to attract notice, they published a long justification of it †, which they communicated to the Society for Constitutional Information. This paper, the professed object of which is to prove the moderation of the society, and to vindicate them from the imputation thrown out against them, concludes in the following words :—" Let us wait, and watch
 " the ensuing Session of Parliament, from which we have
 " much to hope, and little to fear. The House of Commons
 " may have been the source of our calamity—it may prove
 " that of our deliverance; should it not, we trust we shall
 " not prove ourselves unworthy of our forefathers, whose ex-
 " ertions in the cause of mankind so well deserve our imi-
 " tation."

YOUR COMMITTEE have thus given a view of the different proceedings to the close of the year 1792. Early in 1793 ‡, the joint correspondence of the two societies in London with the country societies seems to have been directed to the essen-
 tial purpose of obtaining petitions to the House of Commons in favour of a reform in parliamentary representation, and also petitions from the same societies against the continuance of the war. A series of letters relating to these objects is inserted in the Appendix.—But your Committee think it nec-
 essary

* Coventry, 16th Nov. 1792.

† 30th Nov. 1792.

‡ Appendix C. 11th April 1793.

say to call the particular attention of the House to extracts from some part of this correspondence, from which it will appear, that the measure of addressing petitions to the House of Commons, in 1793, on the subject of parliamentary reform, was adopted without either any approbation of that mode of application, or any hope of success in its professed object; and that the societies approved of those petitions, even in the responsible language in which they were expressed, with no other view than that of accommodating themselves, for a time, to supposed prejudices and circumstances, and of opening the way to the prosecution of their design in that mode which they have since actually pursued, and which appears even then to have been in their contemplation. From some of these letters it is evident, that the London Corresponding Society had, previous to the month of March 1793 * (although the letter itself, in which they did so, has not been found) listed, for the consideration of the country societies, three propositions :

First, A petition to Parliament.

Secondly, A petition to the King.

Thirdly, A Convention.

And in a subsequent letter of the 4th of March, from the Corresponding Society to the society at Sheffield, there is this paragraph :

" With regard to petitioning Parliament, we are unanim-
 " ously of opinion, that *such a petition would not produce a*
 " *reform*; yet from many considerations we are now per-
 " suaded, that *if every society in the island will send forward a*
 " *petition*, we shall ultimately gain ground, for as much as it
 " will force the members of the Senate repeatedly to discuss
 " the subject, and their deliberations, printed in the different
 " newspapers,

* Appendix E. March 1791.

" newspapers, will most naturally awaken the public mind
 " towards the object of our pursuit. The nation, once in-
 " formed that a reform in Parliament is sought for in different
 " quarters, gives rise to debates in the House of Commons,
 " (and is acknowledged in every rank to be wanting,) will
 " begin to exercise their own reason on the subject :—*Arriv-*
 " *ed at that period, we presume our labours will be nearly ac-*
 " *complished.*"

In a letter from the United Political Societies at Norwich, dated 5th March 1793^a, to the Society for Constitutional Information, they state, that they see a great propriety in universal suffrage and annual election ; but wish to know what has been collected to be the sense of the people ; that the Corresponding Societies of London have recently submitted three propositions for their investigation :

Whether a petition to parliament, or an address to the King, or a convention : They say, that they are a conquered people under that degrading necessity—to state their grievances to the House of Commons, with a request for redress ; and should they refuse to grant their reasonable petitions, they have still got (no thanks to them) a formidable engine that will convey the insult to the remotest parts of the kingdom.—As to the propriety of the second, they say, they are dubious of its good consequences.—Lastly, as to a convention, they say, it is the object that they pursue ; that they shew superior means only in subordination, and as having a tendency to accomplish that desirable end ; but, they add, wishing to be in union with their brethren, they desire to know whether it is necessary to obtain signatures to a petition.

The answer to this letter from Norwich has been already
 mentioned

^a Norwich, March 1793.

" bring into light that host of well-meaning men, who, in the
 " different towns and counties of this realm, are silently but
 " seriously anxious for reformation in the government.

" We exhort you with anxiety to pursue your laudable en-
 " deavours for the common good, and never to despair of the
 " public cause *".

The letters of the Corresponding Society of the 17th May and 25th July 1793, and of the Norwich Society of the 5th of July, and various passages in the proceedings of the Scotch Convention, and of those of the Society at Sheffield, will be found to contain additional proofs of what has been represented to be the real view and intention of presenting these petitions; but being subsequent to the time when these petitions were presented, they will be more particularly referred to in stating the transactions during the remainder of the year 1793, of which your Committee will proceed to take notice.

After the rejection of the petitions in May 1793, and the determination of the House upon the subject of a change in the representation in Parliament, the Correspondence inserted in the Appendix will shew that the union and concert between the two Societies in London seem to have acquired additional strength †. It is soon afterwards distinctly stated, *that more effectual means than petitions might be adopted*; and early in the Autumn of 1793, the joint efforts of the two Societies were directed to the formation of a Convention at Edinburgh, to which delegates were to be sent from London, and were invited from many of the country Societies. ‡ Many of these Societies actually sent delegates; and of those who did not several approved of the measure, and only objected to the time; while others, ap-
 proving

* Corresponding Society, 16 April 1793.

† Appendix C. 12. of June 1793.

‡ Appendix C. 13. of Oct. 8. Nov. and 6 Dec. 1793.

proving both of the time and of the measure, declined any share in it on account of their not having received a sufficiently early notice, or of their being unable to afford the expense with which it was necessarily attended.

The immediate foundations of these proceedings appear to have been a letter from the Corresponding Society, May 17th, 1794, to the friends of the people at Edinburgh, which, after expressing their desire to *unite, not only with each other, but with every other society throughout the nation*, proceeds: " Our peti-
 " tions, you will have learned, have all been unsuccessful;
 " our attention must now, therefore, be turned to some more
 " efficient means;—from your society we would willingly
 " learn them, and you, on your part, may depend upon our
 " adopting the firmer measures, provided they are constitu-
 " tional; and we hope the country will not be behind us".[§]

A letter from Skirving to Hardy, dated the 25th May 1793, is inserted in the appendix, and contains many passages which appear to be very material, but which will be more particularly referred to in the account of the correspondence of the Scotch Convention.

On the 10th of June 1793, the Secretary of the Corresponding Society, writes to the Secretary to the Constitutional Society at Birmingham: " We are entirely of your opinion with
 " regard to the necessity of a general union; and believe as
 " you do, that when once the country shall be so united, the
 " Nerves of the day will be forced to yield to the just demand of
 " a long and sore oppressed people".

A letter from the Political Societies at Norwich, which appears to have been received by the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society, on the 25th of June 1793, contains the following passage: " We received your friendly letter
 " wherein

§ Appendix E. 17 May 1793.

" wherein you stated three propositions ; first, a petition to
 " his Majesty ; or to parliament ; or, a national convention,
 " I gave my opinion on the subject to the Constitutional So-
 " ciety at London, and found their ideas congenial to my own,
 " viz. An address to the King, futile ; a petition to Parlia-
 " ment, as a conquered people, tolerable ; a national conven-
 " tion, if circumstances permitted, best of all*.

And in a letter from the Secretary of the Corresponding So-
 ciety, of the 25th of July 1793, which appears to be an an-
 swer to the foregoing, it is said, " With regard to the ques-
 " tions themselves, however individuals may have made up
 " their minds on them, the public seemed most to approve of
 " *the mode of petitioning Parliament; we accordingly acquiesced,*
 " and sent in a Petition, signed by nearly 6,000 persons ;
 " with this letter you will receive a copy of it, and of its fate
 " you are doubtless not unacquainted." After saying that
 their demand is not confined to words, and that they will
 be foremost in asserting and recovering the lost liberties of the
 country, the letter recommends to the Norwich Society to form
 a junction with all others associated for the same purpose
 throughout the nation ; and above all *orderly and courageously*
to prepare themselves for the worst, as they cannot expect to regain
all their rights without a struggle ; that it may be advantageous
 to humanity, that they should show themselves at least an *in-*
dependent oppressed people, in whom is not yet entirely extinct the
valor of their forefathers.

In the month of October the resolutions were passed in the
 Society for Constitutional Information, and the London Cor-
 responding Society, relative to the Convention at Edinburgh,
 which have been already taken notice of*.

The Society for Constitutional Information at Sheffield in-
 form,

* Appendix C.

" It is with great satisfaction we read your letter, and approve of your having elected your delegates to serve upon such a laudable undertaking; but, if you meant for the Leeds Society to adopt the same measure, shall be glad if you will defer this immediately; as we are not acquainted with the time of their sitting, we fear our delegates will be too late."

A letter from the Society of Birmingham to the London Constitutional Society states that they had received a letter from the Constitutional Society, which had obtained the approbation of every member present, and that they would at all times concur with the Constitutional Society in any measure that may have a tendency to hasten the return of departed liberty; that the object of the mission of delegates to the Scotch Convention is a measure upon which depends the regeneration of Britain from a state of slavery to a state of freedom and happiness; and that the Society at Birmingham have only to regret that at present their ability will not allow them to co-operate with the Constitutional Society, by sending a delegate to the Convention at Edinburgh; and this they state to be one of the calamities of the present state.

The Society at Coventry transmit to the London Constitutional Society the copy of a resolution of the 28th October 1793, relative to the election of delegates, communicating their approbation of a measure which they conceive peculiarly calculated to accelerate the acquisition of the object proposed †.

THE proceedings of the Convention, which assembled at Edinburgh in the close of 1793, appear to your committee to have been of such importance, and to throw so much light upon

* Appendix E. Birmingham, 4 Nov. 1793.

† Appendix E. Coventry, 19 Nov. 1793.

upon the subject of this part of the report, that it has been thought necessary to give a connected account of them in this place, with references to extracts from the minutes of that assembly inserted in the appendix; and, in order to render this account more complete, it may be necessary shortly to recur to the proceedings of two other meetings which had taken place at Edinburgh at an earlier period *.

A number of persons, styling themselves a General Convention of delegates from the Societies of the Friends of the People throughout Scotland, appear, from the papers laid before the Committee, to have assembled at Edinburgh on the 11th of December 1792, for the purpose, as they alledged, of concerting measures for obtaining a redress of grievances, and for restoring the freedom of election, and an equal representation of the people in Parliament.—This meeting was composed of a number of persons assembled from different parts of Scotland, and delegated by the various clubs and societies which had lately been established in that country under the name of the Friends of the People.—They amounted to about 170, amongst whom were some persons of a higher situation and rank in life, most of whom however afterwards discontinued their attendance.—Skirving, since convicted and transported by sentence of the Court of Justiciary, acted as their secretary, and continued uniformly to act in that capacity.

After sitting a few days, this convention appears to have adjourned to the end of April 1793, when they again assembled, though not in such numbers as before, Skirving still officiating as their secretary, and corresponding with all the Societies in Scotland, and several in England, on the subject of a Petition to Parliament. This convention separated in four days, and appointed their next meeting to take place at Edinburgh on the 29th October following.

I

About

* Appendix F.

About the time when the first convention separated, in April 1793, a correspondence seems to have commenced between Skirving (the Secretary) and various societies in England; and the system of uniting all these societies in Great Britain and Ireland, in common measures, appears to have been regularly acted upon. From a variety of letters found in the possession of Skirving when apprehended at Edinburgh on the 9th December 1793, it appears that he corresponded, as Secretary of the Scotch Convention, with the following societies:

The Society for Constitutional Information, Crown and Anchor Tavern, London;

The London Corresponding Society;

The Society of the Friends of the People, Free Maltese Tavern, London;

The Sheffield Constitutional Society;

The Leeds Constitutional Society;

Nottingham Society for promoting a Parliamentary Reform; and

A Society at Norwich.

The correspondence with the Sheffield Constitutional Society commences in April 1793.

Three letters from their Secretary were found in the possession of Skirving to whom they were addressed.

The first of these, including a copy of the Petition then about to be presented to the House of Commons—The second, including a list of resolutions against the war, which the Secretary transmits, with a request that they should be adopted by all the societies in Great Britain—And the third, dated the 27th of May, after acknowledging the receipt of a letter of the 10th of that month from Skirving, communicating to the Sheffield Society the proceedings of the Convention at Edinburgh, which separated in April, approves of its proceedings, and

and states an address made by their late president to the Sheffield Society, which after complaining of the late rejection of the Sheffield petition in the House of the Commons, declares, that a reform in Parliament can never be brought about but by the powerful interposition of the great body of the people *.

The Society of Leeds begin their correspondence with Skirving, by a letter of the 29th of May 1793, by desiring *personal communication* with the Society of Edinburgh, requesting its assistance and instruction, and though their numbers are few, not exceeding 200, they are men, and determined to instruct their neighbours in their common interest†.

On the 18th of May 1793, the Friends of the People, Free Mason Tavern, London, passed a vote of thanks to the Convention which had taken place the beginning of that year, for their zeal and activity in the cause of parliamentary reform, and recommended a continuance of the same spirit, industry, and temper, during the recess of Parliament‡. This vote appears to have been transmitted to Skirving in a letter from the secretary, which requests that the vote of thanks might be communicated to the various societies in Scotland §.

On the 23d of July, the secretary of the Friends of the People wrote another letter to Skirving (apparently in answer to a letter from him on the subject) in which is the following passage—“The plan of delegates, would be very improper in this country at present. A very small part of it indeed would be useful for reform. If such a meeting is attempted, it will operate, like many rash steps of some who will well to the cause, much to its disadvantage ¶.”

Another

* Vide Appendix F. (No. 1.)

† Vide Appendix F. (No. 2.)

‡ Vide Appendix F. (No. 3.)

§ 18th May 1793. Vide Appendix F. (No. 4.)

¶ 23d July 1793. Vide Appendix, (No. 5.)

Another letter, dated 25th October, from the Secretary of the Friends of the People in London, addressed also to Skirving, acknowledged the receipt of several copies of the *Trial of Muir and Palmer*, which he says he will bind up with the *Trial of Paine*, and recommends to the Scottish Convention to avoid the violence which has done much mischief to the cause of reform in England *.

The Correspondence of the London Corresponding Society with Skirving, previous to May 1793, does not appear; but a letter of the 17th of this month, from the Secretary to Skirving, which has been already referred to, solicits a renewal of correspondence, and more intimate co-operation.

To this an answer was returned by Skirving, dated 25th May 1793, which has also been before referred to, and has the following remarkable passages:

" If we sought only the coöperation of one set of interested
 " men from the management of national affairs, that place
 " might be given to another set, without affecting the vital of
 " the system which is reform, this might be easily accomplished;
 " ed; but to cut up wide and deep rooted prejudices, to
 " give efficient energy to the dictates of truth in favour of
 " public virtue and national prosperity, in opposition to self
 " and all its interested habits, and to withstand and overcome
 " the fatal efforts of the powers of darkness, is the work of
 " the whole, and not of a part;—a work to which mankind,
 " all this awful period, were never adequate, because never,
 " all were disposed to fraternize.

" Let us begin in earnest to make up our minds relative to
 " the extent of reform which we ought to seek, be prepared
 " to justify it, and to counteract objections. Let us model
 " the whole in the public mind. Let us provide every state
 and

* 25th October 1793. Vide Appendix F. (No. 6.)

11 and glory of the tabernacle which we would erect; so that
 12 when the tabernacles of oppression in the palace of evil-
 13 ties are broken down, under the madness and folly of their
 14 supporters, we may then, without hurry and all danger,
 15 ere long, erect at once our tabernacle of righteousness."

On the 5th of October, the secretary of the London Corresponding Society again writes to Skirving *, highly approving of the idea of a Convention, and expressing his belief that the London Corresponding Society will send delegates to it: "Our Freedom, as you justly observe, depends entirely on ourselves, and upon our availing ourselves of this opportunity, which once lost may not be so soon recovered."

On the 11th of November, he again writes to the delegates Margaret and Gerald, then in Edinburgh, informing them of what had been doing in the Society since their departure; and requests to be favoured "with the number of delegates in the convention, and the number from England also, and how the civil and military power relishes your meeting."

On the 29th of November, he again writes as then, stating that the General Committee "are highly pleased with
" the proposed union with our northern brethren, and beg
" you will use every exertion in your power to establish that
" defensible union upon a firm and permanent basis. It gives
" us great pleasure and encouragement to hear that the spirit
" of liberty is so flourishing in the north, and are happy to
" inform you that the same noble spirit is making a rapid
" progress in the south."

The instructions from the Corresponding Society to Margaret and Gerald, dated the 24th of October 1793, signed by their chairman and secretary, were also found in the possession

* *World Development* 3, pp. 65, 1975.

† *Arch. Microsc. Cop.* 1993. This document is in the public domain in the United States of America.

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sition of Skirving. They consist of nine different articles. By article 1st, the delegate is instructed, that "he shall on
" no account depart from the original object and principles
" of this Society, namely, the obtaining universal parliamentary
" and universal suffrage by rational and lawful means:

" 2d. To support the opinion that representatives in Par-
" liament ought to be paid by their constituents :

" 7th. That it is the duty of the people to resist any act
" of Parliament repugnant to the original principles of the
" Constitution, as would be every attempt to prohibit edu-
" cation for the purpose of reform."

The instructions by the Society for Constitutional Informa-
tion to their delegates were also found in the possession of
Skirving; the purport of which have been already stated in
the former Report of the Committee.

There was likewise found in the possession of Skirving*, a
letter from the Secretary of the Leeds Constitutional Society,
addressed "to the members of the Scotch Convention," and
which is inserted at full length in the appendix †.

From the papers produced to the Committee, it appears that
this Convention did accordingly assemble at Edinburgh on the
28th of October last, to the number of about 150 persons;
and after sitting four days, in the hope of being joined by
the delegates from England, they separated, in the apprehen-
sion that the English delegates did not mean to attend.—Two
days afterwards Margaret and Gerald, with two other persons,
one of them a delegate from the London Society for Consti-
tutional Information, and the other a delegate from Sheffield,
arrived in Edinburgh. Skirving immediately called together
a new convention, to meet upon the 15th of November; and
in

* 18th Nov. 1843.

† Appendix F. (No. 1.)

in an advertisement inserted in the Newspaper called *The Edinburgh Gazetteer**, and by hand bills, strongly urged the necessity of the delegates throughout Scotland attending to this meeting.

About the 4th or 5th of November, Messrs. Hamilton Rowan, and Butler, members of the Society of United Irishmen of Dublin, arrived at Edinburgh from Ireland, though with no immediate commission on this behalf; but during the week they remained in that place, they with the English delegates, attended the meeting of the general committee of the Convention, in which it was agreed to receive these two gentlemen as delegates from the Society of United Irishmen. Mr. Hamilton Rowan appears to have acknowledged, by voluntary declaration before the Sheriff of Edinburgh, that he had been solicited by letter from Scotland on the subject of sending delegates from the Society of United Irishmen to attend the Scotch Convention; but he declined mentioning the names of the person or persons who had so corresponded with him.

This convention accordingly met on the 15th of November, to the number of about 160, and rather a greater proportion of country delegates than before. Rowan and Butler were by this time returned to Ireland. But the English delegates remained, and regularly attended the Convention as long as it continued to meet.

During the three first days the Convention appears, from its minutes, to have chiefly employed itself on matters of form; but having on the 22d November 1793, changed its title to that of "*The British Convention of delegates of the people, associated to obtain universal suffrage and annual parliaments,*" they, in almost every particular, assumed the title and mode of proceeding

* Appendix F. (No. 9.)

proceeding adopted by the National Convention of France. They divided themselves into sections—committees of organization, instructions, finance, and foreign; demarcated their meetings—salings; granted honours of sittings; made honourable mention in their minutes of patriotic donations; entered these minutes as made in the first year of the British Convention; instituted primary societies, provincial assemblies, and departments; received from their sections a variety of motions and reports—some of which have the words “Vive la Convention” prefixed to them, and end with “ça ira”—and some dated “First year of the British Convention, etc and etc.”

Having at last, on the 25th of November, with popular solemnity, passed a resolution, which necessarily attracted the attention of the law-officers of the Crown, the magistrates, with all their papers, were seized, early on the morning of the 5th of December, and carried before the proper magistrate for examination. The resolution alluded to, and which appears from the minutes (extracts from which are stated in the Appendix) to have been the subject of frequent and deliberate consideration, was decreed by the Convention, as not expedient to be inserted immediately in its proper place. The insertion of it appears to have been postponed till the close of the Convention, and a blank was left for that purpose in the minutes. The motion, with the resolutions founded thereon, was discovered amongst the papers of the delegate from the Society for Constitutional Information in London, and it is of the following tenor:

“Resolved, That the following declaration and resolu-

“tion, be inserted at the end of our minutes; viz.

“That this Convention, considering the calamitous consequences of any act of the Legislature which may tend to
“deprive

" deprive the whole or any part of the people of their just
 " dearest right to meet, either by themselves or by delegates
 " their, to discuss any matter relative to their common interest
 " civil, whether of a public or private nature, and holding
 " the same to be totally inconsistent with the first principles
 " and safety of society, and also subversive of our known and
 " acknowledged constitutional liberties; do hereby declare;
 " before God and the world, that we shall follow the wholesome
 " lessons examples of former times, by paying no regard to us
 " as any act which shall militate against the constitution of our
 " country, and shall continue to assemble and consider of the
 " best means by which we can accomplish a redress of the
 " wrongs of the people, and annual election; until compelled
 " to desist by superior force.

" And we do resolve, That the first notice given for the
 " introduction of a constitution bill, or any bill of a similar
 " tendency to that passed in Ireland in the last Session of their
 " Parliament;

" Or any bill for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act;
 " or the Act for preventing Wrongs and Imprisonments, and
 " against Unlawful Delays in Trial in North Britain;

" Or in case of an invasion; or the admission of any for-
 " eign troops whatsoever into Great Britain or Ireland;

" All or any one of these calamitous circumstances, shall
 " be a signal to the several delegates to repair to such place as
 " the Secret Committee of this Convention shall appoint; and
 " the first seven members shall have power to declare the sit-
 " ings permanent, shall constitute a convention, and twenty-
 " one proceed to business;

" The Convention doth hereby further resolve, That each
 " delegate, immediately on his return home, do convey his
 " constituents, and explain to them the necessity of electing
 " a delegate or delegates, and of establishing a fund, without

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" delay,

" delay, against any of these emergencies, for his or their em-
 " ploy; and that they do instruct the said delegate or dele-
 " gates to hold themselves ready to depart at once here's
 " warning."

These resolutions appear, from the minutes, to have been immediately followed up by the appointment of a secret com-
 mittee, whose powers and mode of proceeding are precisely
 and distinctly marked out in the minutes of the Convention.
 It is proper farther to state, that on the 4th of December, the
 day preceding the arrest of the ringleaders, when they prob-
 ably had either received information, or had suspected from
 their own conduct that measures were to be taken against
 them, the Convention, on the motion of Margaret, unanim-
 ously resolved,

" That the moment of any illegal dispersion of the British
 " Convention shall be considered as a summons to the dele-
 " gates to repair to the place of meeting appointed for the
 " Convention of Emergency by the Secret Committee; and
 " that the Secret Committee be instructed, without delay,
 " to proceed to fix the place of meeting.

Upon the evening of the 5th of December the Conven-
 tion met, notwithstanding the arrest of their leading members
 upon the morning of that day, and proceeded instantly to de-
 clare themselves permanent, and to meet in spite of the mag-
 istrates; but were prevented from proceeding further by the
 unexpected appearance of the Magistrates, to whose authori-
 ty they refused to submit, until the Provost of the city seized
 the Sheffield delegate, their president, and compelled him to
 leave the chair. They again met on the evening of the 6th
 of December in a house in the suburbs of the city, and were
 proceeding with the same violence as on the preceding even-
 ing, when the Sheriff of the county interrupted and dispersed
 them.

them. Since this period no public meeting has been held; but they have continued to meet privately, and in different societies, and appear still to carry on a secret correspondence with various parts of England and Scotland. An abstract of the minutes of this Convention, and of the most material motions and proceedings held amongst these persons, and three letters to the secretary of the Corresponding Society, are subjoined in the Appendix to this Report *.

Subsequent to the dispersion of the Scotch Convention, the plan for calling another convention in England became the immediate object of the two societies in London. An account of their proceedings for this purpose has already been laid before the House in the former report; but in order to give a more connected view of the whole subject, your committee have inserted, in order of time, in the Appendix, the same proceedings to which they have already referred. Your Committee having observed, that the variation between the entry on the books of the Society for Constitutional Information, of the 21st of April 1794, and the entry of the report received the same day, from the joint committee of the two societies, is likely to be relied on, as tending to shew that the Society for Constitutional Information did not concur with their constituents in the design of assembling a pretended General Convention of the people, have inserted at full length in the Appendix † all that appears in the books of the Constitutional Society on that subject. They have also thought it right to insert the account given of this transaction, in the examination of Mr Thompkin, a member of this house, to which they refer ‡.

In

* Appendix F. (Nos. 10, 11, 12, & 13.)

† Appendix C. Dec. 6. 1793. Jan. 10. 24. March. 28. April 4. 17 and May 9. 1794.

‡ Examination of Mr. Thompkin, Appendix G.

In pursuance of the plan which they have adopted, the Committee have next inserted such correspondence and proceedings of the societies for the country, as have passed since the dispersion of the Convention at Edinburgh, with relation to the measures to be taken in consequence of that event, and to their occurrence in the design, formed in London, for affording another convention in England.

At a general meeting of delegates, held at Norwich, it was unanimously resolved, that one or more delegates shall be sent to the first General Convention, as soon as called for by their London Correspondents *.

In a letter to the secretary of the London Corresponding Society, from the Norwich societies, they desire to know whether the Friends of the People consent to a Convention, and whether they will take up *active* part—“ Many of our friends “ are fully convinced of the necessity, expediency, and rationality of “ a Convention; but *dispute* whether the time be expedient †”.

1. Some persons, who describe themselves friends to a radical reform, write from Newcastle upon Tyne, to the secretary of the Corresponding Society, that they dissent from the natural and inalienable rights of man, and have formed themselves into Societies, which meet weekly, admitting none but *home* friends, and have assumed no name but that of newspaper correspondents.—They were in great straits while the Bristol Convention continued to sit; but after their suppression, a damp was cast on the whole.—Subscriptions were ready to be sent off the very night they were suppressed.—They wish to copy the example of the London Corresponding Society, and to know their

* Appendix B. Norwich, Feb. 22. 1794.

† Appendix B. April 25. 1794.

their views and intentions as soon as convenient; and desiring to be favored with the correspondence of that Society—they conclude, by expressing a hope “ that the hydra of tyranny and imposition may soon fall under the gallant of truth and reason.” The Corresponding Society return an answer, in which they exhort the Society at Newcastle to be assured, that the glorious reign of *Liberty and Equality* will, ere long, be established, and *arbitrary Governments*, with every appendage of *wickedness and corruption*, will flee from their germinating influence.—They complain of the rapid advances of despotism in Great Britain, and express their readiness cordially to unite with every friend in the three Kingdoms, who have for their object a full and efficient representation of the people: they therefore have deputed six of their members to meet the members of the Society for Constitutional Information, to form a committee of correspondence and co-operation.—“ This committee meets regularly twice a week, and any member delegated by your Society, will meet with every information required. We inclose you a few of our resolutions, entered into at our general meeting on the 14th of April, which will be sufficiently explanatory of our feelings and views. We heartily concur with you in wishing that the hydra of Tyranny and imposition may soon fall under the gallant of truth and reason.”

A letter to the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society, from the Secretary of the Constitutional Society at Sheffield, gives us account of a meeting at Halifax. The Friends of Peace and Reform at Halifax held a general public meeting in the open air, on April 21st, 1794, at which were many friends from Leeds, Wakefield, Huddersfield, Bradford, and

the

* Appendix, H. Newcastle upon Tyne, 1st May 1794.

the adjacent neighbourhood*.—The Friends of Freedom after the meeting, agreed to hold a general meeting of delegates, in order to consider of the measures to be adopted by them *proprietory to a general convention*.—The people of Halifax were advised by the society at Sheffield to *defer the meeting of delegates until further information from the London Corresponding Society*, on that subject; and for that reason application was made to the secretary of the London Corresponding Society, requesting as early intelligence as possible on that important business.

The Society at Halifax approved the resolution of the London Corresponding Society for *forming another general convention*, and state that their increasing numbers give them every reasonable hope of soon being able more effectually to co-operate with that society—they define a sketch of the plan respecting the General Convention. In the answer of the London Corresponding Society it is stated, that a printed circular letter from them has been determined upon, of which the Society at Halifax may expect a copy in a few days.—This refers to the *circular letter for calling a convention*, inserted by your Committee in their former report.

Our Committee have thought it right in this place to call the attention of the House to the proceedings of a meeting held at Sheffield on the 7th of April 1794, which form a very material part of these transactions; although it does not appear that at that meeting any resolution was passed expressing an intention to send delegates to the intended Convention.

These proceedings consist of an address to the king; an address to the nation; certain resolutions; and speeches (printed together with them, and) delivered on the same day by a person

* Appendix H. Halifax, 22 May 1794.

† Appendix H. Sheffield, 22 April 1794.

person calling himself Henry Yorke.—The title is as follows :

“ Proceedings of the Public Meeting held at Sheffield, in
 “ the open air, on the 7th of April 1794 ; and also an
 “ address to the British nation, being an exposition of the
 “ motives which have determined the people of Sheffield
 “ to petition the House of Commons on *more* on the subject
 “ of Parliamentary Reform.”

In the course of these proceedings it was moved, “ That a
 “ petition be presented to the House of Commons, for a re-
 “ form in the representation of the people in parliament.”
 But so marked was the disapprobation given by the whole
 meeting to this measure, that not one single person *seconded*
 the motion, but a most profound silence, interrupted only by
 a few murmurs, was observed.

An account is afterwards given of one of Yorke’s speeches,
 in which, after speaking of general history, there is the fol-
 lowing passage :

“ It must be granted that this experience is important, be-
 “ cause it teaches the suffering nations of the present day in
 “ what manner to prepare *their combustible ingredients*, and
 “ humbly in what manner *relieve* them, so as to produce
 “ with effect that *grand political explosion*, which at the same
 “ time that it burys despotism, already convulsive and agoniz-
 “ ing, in ruin, may raise up the people to the dignity and
 “ sublime grandeur of freedom.”

“ When such a revolution of sentiment shall have dispers-
 “ ed the mists of prejudice : when, by the incessant thunder-
 “ bolts from the press, the *meanest cottager* of our country
 “ shall be enlightened, and the *fan of reason* shall blow in its
 “ hottest meridian over us, then the *commanding voice* of the
 “ *whole people* shall *renew* the *free hundred and fifty-eight*
 “ *Centuries* in *St. Stephen’s chapel* to go about *their business*.”

The

The resolutions adopted at the meeting were ;

" 1st. That the people being the true and only source of
" government, the freedom of speaking and writing upon
" any subject, cannot be denied to the members of a free
" government, without offering the grossest insult to the ma-
" jesty of the people.

" 2d. That therefore the condemnation of citizens Blair,
" Palmer, Selving, Margaret, and Gerrald to transportation,
" for exposing the corruptions of the British govern-
" ment, was as well better suited to the maxims of a despotic
" than a free government.

" 3d. That the address which has now been read, be pre-
" sented to the king, in behalf of the above persecuted pa-
" trons.

" 4th. That in every country where the people have no
" share in their government, absolute is tyranny.

" 5th. That therefore a government is tyrannical or free,
" in proportion as the people are equally or unequally repre-
" sented.

" 6th. Convinced of this truth, it is the opinion of this
" meeting that the people ought to demand as a right and
" not petition as a favour, for universal representation,

" 7th. That therefore we will petition the House of Com-
" mons no more, on this subject."

And lastly (after agreeing to a petition to the king respect-
ing negro slavery, and passing several resolutions on that sub-
ject) "That the Committee of the Sheffield Constitutional
" Society be desired to see that the above resolutions be car-
" ried into effect ;" and that they prepare an address to the Bri-
" tish nation, explanatory of the motives which have induced
" this meeting to adopt the resolution of no more petitioning
" the House of Commons on the subject of reform."

The

The following Passages are extracted from this address.

" Friends and Countrymen,

" We have this day decided, with the exception of only
 " one dissentient voice, that the House of Commons shall ne-
 " ver again be petitioned by us on the subject of Parliamen-
 " ary Reform.

The address then recites the words of the petition of the
 8th of April 1793, [" That the House of Commons
 " is not in the just sense of the words what your petitioners
 " are from form obliged to term it, viz. the Commons of
 " Great Britain in Parliament assembled ;"] and then pro-
 ceeds in different passages, as follows :

" Our petition was received with the utmost indignation by
 " the House of Commons, which was no more than we ex-
 " pected.—

" And although our Petition was disdainfully rejected be-
 " cause not couched in language sufficiently polite and re-
 " spectful for the *five hundred and fifty-eight gentlemen* who sit
 " at the House of Commons ; yet, believe us, Fellow Cit-
 " izens, we are still of opinion, that the matter is contained
 " was not only just and proper, but we think that even the
 " language which gave so much offence to the *honourable gen-
 " tlemen* was *much too polite and too moderate* for us. For if the
 " House of Commons were the real representatives of the peo-
 " ple, we certainly had a right to *dissate, and not to petition*,
 " because they could be considered in no other light than as
 " the organs of the public will, and if they refused to obey
 " that will, they would be usurpers and not representatives.—

" However the petition, such as it was, being termed dis-
 " respectful, was thrown out by a majority of 79, there be-
 " ing 29 only who voted for its being received, and 108 who
 " voted against it.—

L

" Such

" voice of the whole community, or their representatives, are
 " nothing less than arbitrary edicts under different names, and bear
 " a strong resemblance to the rescripts of the Emperors, or the
 " decrees of the Vatican.——

" What is the constitution to us, if we see nothing to it?
 " And what is any government but tyranny, in which the
 " people have no share? The constitution of Britain, indeed
 " is highly extolled, as the greatest effort of human wisdom;
 " so is the constitution of Turkey at Constantinople; But
 " these are prejudices; and the long tyranny of prejudice is
 " waging to a speedy termination.——

" Yes, Countrymen, we demand equality of rights,¹ to
 " which is included equality of representation; without which
 " terror is law, and the obligations of justice are weakened,
 " because unfashioned by the sacred voice of the people.
 " We are not speaking of that visionary equality of property,
 " the practical assertion of which would delistate the world, and
 " replunge it into the darkest and wildest barbarism; but that
 " equality we claim is to make the slave a man, the man a ci-
 " tizen, and the citizen an integral part of the state; *to make*
 " *him a just sovereign, and not a subject.*"

The reasons which induced the meeting at Sheffield to coin-
 any resolutions upon the subject of the intended convention,
 have been distinctly stated, by two persons who had been Se-
 cretaries to the Constitutional Society in that town.

From their examination it appears that a number of printed
 circular letters had been received at Sheffield from the Secre-
 tary to the London Corresponding Society, relative to a con-
 vention, and that the Sheffield Society objected to the calling it
 at this time, but had no objection to the measure itself; that
 it was their opinion that the British Convention at Edinburgh
 ought to have secured the confidence of the people by a public
 address to the nation, before they had ventured to fix as a per-
 manent

liament body; and that the address from Sheffield to the nation, containing a recommendation that no more petitions should be presented to Parliament, was intended to prepare the people for a convention.

While these proceedings were taking place in different parts of England, with a view to a general convention, it appears from the information contained in the letters from the Secretary of State, which have been already referred to, that measures of a similar tendency were carrying on with great activity, and to a great extent, in Scotland. The appointment of delegates to attend a convention to be assembled at some place in England at an early period, seems to have been very generally recommended by the committee at Edinburgh.

The naming the place was for the present omitted, but it was promised to be shortly announced through the secret committee, in the same manner as appears from the circular letters of the London Corresponding Society (inserted in the former Report) to have been intended in this part of the kingdom; and the invitation to appoint delegates appears to have been circulated by the same officers who were employed by the Committee at Edinburgh for the purpose of promoting the plan of acting close with whom they were in correspondence.

From a review of these proceedings, it indisputably appears that the immediate and ostensible object professed to be aimed at by the measures which have been related (if stated within the narrowest limits) was that of effecting no less fundamental a change in the frame of the House of Commons, than the introduction of universal suffrage in the election of it, and rendering the period of the election annual: That through the whole course of the correspondence which has been carried on, and the concert which has been formed by different societies for this purpose, no idea has far a long time been pointed at,
of

of obtaining this change by *any application to Parliament*; that on the contrary any such idea has been specifically and pointedly disclaimed, recently by the formal and in some instances public resolutions of the Societies in London, and many of those in the country, and repeatedly, and from an early period, in the private correspondence, either of the Societies or of their leading members. It has been expressly laid down, that more effectual means than petitions must be tried. The express object stated in the resolutions for calling the proposed general convention of the people or general meeting of the friends of liberty (under which ever of these names it is to be described) was to consider of the means of obtaining a full and equal representation, not of the thing obtained, but of the *means of obtaining it*, and this subsequent to the declarations last mentioned, that more effectual means than petitions must be tried. These more effectual means could, in the very nature of the thing, consist of but one of two possible alternatives, either introducing this change in the frame of one branch of the legislature, by some other authority than that of the legislature itself; or bringing that legislature, either by force or intimidation, against its will, to lend its authority to that purpose.

Accordingly the wildest terms in which, for a long time, the parties to this measure have described the mode by which they expected to attain their ends, have pointed at its extending and diffusing these Societies, and establishing such an union and concert among them, as might spread their principles and opinions through every part of the country, and produce a declaration of the collective sense of the people, in such a manner as to overcome all resistance.

But on many other occasions, and more openly of late, the language adopted has pointed more distinctly at the use of open force; at the specific object of actually effecting a pretended national convention; at the necessity of preparing *unrepealingly* for the STRUGGLE, which they must expect, before

before those who were adverse to their measures would yield to them; and at obtaining the redress which they profess to seek, not from Parliament, or from the executive government, but FROM THEMSELVES, and from THEIR OWN STRENGTH AND VALOUR, from their own laws, and not from the laws of those whom they term their plunderers, enemies, and oppressors: And when the language to this effect repeatedly and deliberately used on many occasions, and in so many quarters, is combined with the means lately employed for providing an armed force, and with the other projects of violence and open attack on different branches of the existing authority, which have appeared to be in the contemplation of some of the parties in these measures, it is impossible not to conclude, that it was by such means, by their own strength and numbers, by open force, defying and either overthrowing or superseding the authority of the legislature, that (in the extravagance of their imagination) they had formed the hope of accomplishing their daring and desperate designs.

But, extravagant and excessive as this project is, even on this statement, it appears to your Committee to be by no means confined even within these limits. The attempt to obtain a change in one branch of the legislature by force or terror, against the will of the whole, does indeed of itself include, if successful, at least a temporary suspension of all the existing powers of Government, and could hardly be supposed to stop there of an entire destruction of the Constitution. But from the whole tenor of the system which has been acted upon, it is apparent that this was not merely the possible or probable consequence of such an attempt, but that the principles on which it was founded, and the mode by which it was intended to be executed, obviously and necessarily tended to such a result. The principles on which the supposed right of universal suffrage was founded, were not such as led merely

to the single act of altering to that extent, the frame of the House of Commons, and afterwards leaving the House of Commons, thus modelled, in possession, together with the Crown and the House of Lords, of their former legislative authority, or the Crown in possession of its former executive power; but, while they led to an alteration in the frame of the House of Commons, they equally led, if carried to their natural extent, to the extinction and destruction of the other two branches of the legislature.

A proposition so extravagant may at first be difficult to be realised; but it appears to the Committee to be distinctly proved, from an examination of the nature of the principles themselves; from a consideration of the system as actually carried into effect in France, and proposed as a model by those who were the chief actors in these proceedings in this country; and, by repeated declarations or acts, which either directly or by necessary inference point at the destruction of hereditary monarchy, hereditary nobility, and every distinction of orders and ranks of society.

Your Committee have stated to the House in their former Report, that subsequent to the steps taken for the apprehension of the persons suspected of being concerned in the design which has been the subject of this Report, strong indications had appeared of a disposition to concert the means of resisting such measures as might be adopted for preventing the accomplishment of the design itself, or for bringing the authors or abettors of it to punishment.

It appears to your Committee, that immediately after the apprehension of several of the leading members of the London Corresponding Society, a committee was appointed, under the title of a Committee of Emergency, for the express purpose of counteracting the steps which had been taken by the

the executive government to check the further progress of the system which has been detailed in this Report. It also appears that it has been made matter of deliberation, in the divisions of the London Corresponding Society, whether in the present exigency they should proceed to address the King, to petition Parliament, or to make an appeal to the nation at large: The latter proposition was adopted; and, in consequence of that decision, a paper has been printed and published under the name of the London Corresponding Society, and which your Committee has every reason to believe to be authentic: This paper contains the following passages; viz.

" That we intended to call a convention is a truth, which
 " needed neither general warrants, armed messengers, or secret commissioners to discover, since it was accompanied by a
 " resolution, to make that intention known, by 200,000
 " printed copies of that day's proceedings. But the purpose
 " ascribed to that convention, viz. the affixing *legislative*
 " *power* is a grotesque falsehood:—The sole intent was to
 " devise means of attaining a complete representative body,
 " on the principles of universal suffrage, equal personal representation, and annual election; and whenever, or *how*
 " *ever*, such a body can be obtained, it will not be in the
 " power of all the placemen and pensioners in *St. Stephen's*
 " *Chapel* to dispute its legislative authority. We are aware that
 " in these times of *constitutional* inquiry, the last sentence may
 " sound unpleasantly to many, who do not desire to be con-
 " sidered as enemies to liberty:—We therefore wish it to be
 " clearly understood, that we speak of a representative body
 " of the whole nation, and not of any particular part or *division*
 " *of* *men*,—And as the divine rights of Kings is not at
 " this time directly asserted (at least in this country) by any,
 " but the most extremely ignorant, we think it ought to fol-
 " low, as a natural consequence, that the people are the only
 " *legitimate*

" *legitimate source of authority*; and it appears to us that the
 " vain attempt to draw a medium between these opinions
 " has produced endless absurdities and contradictions, to the
 " disgrace of our records and law books. Among these the
 " most conspicuous is called, *The Abdication of James the Se-*
 " *cond*, which phrase (coined for the purpose) may be either
 " understood to mean *his expulsion by popular authority*, or *his*
 " *voluntary resignation*; if the former, it *falsifies the doctrine*
 " *which we have advanced*; if the latter, we scruple not to
 " call it a national lie. To the honour of Scotland, their
 " Parliament explicitly declared him banished *by authority of*
 " *the people*. But, citizens, let us explain the truth:—The
 " expulsion of James the Second, and the establishment of
 " William the Third, though doubtless agreeable to the
 " general wishes of the people, was not in point of form on
 " all of the people. It was the act of a number of persons,
 " calling themselves a convention, but not regularly autho-
 " rised by *popular delegation*, and consequently falling under
 " the description of a *faction*; and this not merely in theory,
 " but in fact; for their unwillingness to acknowledge the
 " *rightful power of the people* was the reason of their adopt-
 " ing the inexplicable phrase above mentioned.

" The providing arms is another charge, on which we
 " wish to speak with caution; lest in asserting, which we do
 " —that it is *totally false*—we should be understood to admit
 " that if it had been true, it would have proved criminality.

" We freely acknowledge, that some of our members have
 " applied themselves to the knowledge of arms; and, far from
 " desiring to make a secret of this circumstance, we with
 " their example was followed by the whole nation. We then
 " need not fear invasion, either from Frenchmen, Hessians,
 " or Hanoverians: Nor should we easily be alarmed by the
 " mock discovery of plots, which never existed.

At

We

" We are perfectly convinced of the propriety of our opi-
 " nions respecting the rights of the people to have arms, and to re-
 " gulate the constitution,

" It may be expected that we should not conclude without
 " exhorting the associated friends of freedom to an active per-
 " severance in the object of their associations,—but, judging from
 " the conduct of our own members, we see happy in declar-
 " ing that we think no such exhortation necessary."

From these passages it appears, that since the apprehension of their leading members, and the measures which have been lately taken in Parliament on the subject of their designs, the London Corresponding Society have openly avowed their intention to call a convention, for the purpose of *choosing* men to *constitute* a complete representative body, on the principles of *direct* election and of universal suffrage, without any re- *striction* whatever to Parliament, (as far as can be collected from their own interpretation of the phrases which they have used to describe the House of Commons) with the further intention of arrogating to the body constituted according to the manner to be prescribed by such a convention, the whole legislative authority of the nation.

It appears also that the London Corresponding Society admit that some of their members have applied themselves to the knowledge of arms, and although they deny having provided arms, they desire not to be understood as admitting that if it had been true it would have proved criminality; and they assert the propriety of their opinion respecting the rights of the people to have arms, and to regulate their constitution.

And this open avowal of the design of calling a convention, and of the fact of having applied themselves to the use of arms, is accompanied with a declaration of their determined purpose to persevere, with activity, in the objects of their associations—

Objects

Objects which have been already sufficiently explained to the House by reference to the acts of the society, and to the professed principles of its leading members.

If the circumstances which have been stated in this Report appear to the House in the same view in which, on the most attentive consideration, they have appeared to your Committee, it is scarcely necessary to state any collateral matter in order to satisfy the House how much the peace, safety, and happiness of the country must have been affected by the further progress of the measures which have been stated.

But if any thing were wanting to add to this impression; it would arise from the recollection, that the instrument so inserted concerning France is other countries is the most distinguishing feature, both of the declared principles and of the uniform practice of France under their present system, and that in the public acts of those exerting the powers of government in that country, an intention of invading their kingdoms, founded on the idea of receiving support and assistance within the country, has been openly avowed. The case does not, however, rest here.—It has come under the observation of your Committee, that recent measures have been actually taken by the ruling powers in France for endeavouring to ascertain, both in Great Britain and Ireland, the degree of co-operation and assistance which they might expect in any attempt of this nature.

This communication does not appear, from any evidence before the Committee, to have any immediate connexion with the societies, whose proceedings have been the subject of this Report; but the connexion with their general objects is sufficiently evident, both from the nature of the thing, and from the particulars which have been stated in the course of the Report.

It is not immaterial to add, that in Ireland their communications appear to have been directly addressed to a person acting in concert with the Society here, one of their honorary members, and who has taken an active part in the course of the proceedings to which your committee have referred.

YOUR COMMITTEES have, for obvious reasons, omitted to annex to their Report the evidence of particular witnesses, by whom the facts above stated are supported ; and, for the same reasons, they have studiously forbore to mention the names of persons and places, in all cases in which they could be admitted with a proper attention to the general object of their enquiry, and to the information which the House has a right to expect upon so important a subject.

END OF THE SECOND REPORT.

SUPPLEMENT to the Second Report from the Committee to whom the several papers referred to in His Majesty's Message of the 12th Day of May 1794, and which were presented (sealed up) to the House, by Mr. Secretary Dundas, upon the 12th and 13th day of the said Month, by His Majesty's Command, were referred; and who were directed to examine the Matters thereof, and report the same, as they should appear to them, to the House.

SINCE the Second Report of the Committee was presented to the House, a letter has been received by the chairman of the Committee from Mr. Grey, a member of this House, and one of the members of the Society of the Friends of the People, on the subject of the correspondence of that Society and the Scotch Convention.

From one of the enclosures transmitted by Mr Grey, it appears that the letters of the Secretary of the Friends of the People, dated the 23d July and 25th October, which are referred to in the second Report, were written without any authority from the Society, or from any committee of the Society, and are considered by him as only private and personal communications from himself: Although this circumstance

did not distinctly appear on the face of the letters, there is nothing in the manner in which they are referred to by your Committee inconsistent with it; and although your Committee, on examining these papers, find nothing in their former statement erroneous, yet, being desirous of putting the House fully in possession of all the additional information which they have received on this subject, they have thought that the most satisfactory way of doing so, is to submit the papers communicated by Mr. Grey, without any comment on the observations and reasoning therein contained.

APPENDIX.

Appendix, No. 1.

Chapel-Street, June 18th.

SIR,

UPON feeling, in the Second Report of the Secret Committee, the Society of the Friends of the People introduced as acting in concert and correspondence with the Scotch Convention, I thought it necessary to make immediate enquiry of the Secretary, as to the circumstances of any communication that might have passed between them.—The result of that enquiry, which I desired him to state to me by letter, I have now the honour of inclosing to you, in order that you may have an opportunity, if you think it material to do so, of something what appears to me to be an erroneous statement in the Report of the Committee. I have also inclosed a printed copy of the proceedings of the Scotch Convention, previous to the time of the only communication ever made by them to the Friends of the People, in December 1793, that it may be seen to what the vote of thanks, inserted in the Report, really referred.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient humble Servant,

C. GREY.

The Rt. Honble. Wm. Pitt.

Appendix,

Appendix, No. 2.

Fifth Street, Soho;
Wednesday Evening, June 11th, 1794.

SIR,

IN compliance with your desire of being accurately informed what correspondence the Friends of the People in London have had with the Convention in Scotland, or with Mr. Skirving, its Secretary, I send you the following particulars, which contain not only the substance of the communications with the Society, but also of those I have personally made, and of the whole subject, as far as it has come within my knowledge.

The first Convention at Edinburgh, in favour of Parliamentary Reform, consisted exclusively of Delegates from the different Societies of the Friends of the People in Scotland. By their minutes they appear to have declined communicating with any Society which did not take that title. They first met on the 11th of December 1793, and sat only three days. Their name of "Convention" was familiar to meetings in Scotland; and they stated the object of their institution to have been to consolidate the common strength of the Friends of Reform in that part of the country; which is the very justification given for the establishment of a similar body, for a similar purpose, in London, in 1789.

In their last sitting, on the 13th of December, they voted that certain resolutions should be sent to the Friends of the People in London; which, together with the letter inclosing them, I herewith transmit. This was the only communication made with that body. The answer to it stated, that by some accident the resolutions registered in the letter were not inclosed; but that the Society had seen them in the newspapers: It also assured them of the approbation and concurrence of the Friends of the People in London, according to the terms of their several declarations. I afterwards received printed copies of its proceedings, in December 1793 and May 1794, and could not perceive any thing in them that was not strictly confined to a reasonable Parliamentary Reform.

On

On the 2d of May 1793, after having sat three days, it adjourned till October. Many gentlemen of great respectability and of large property were members of it. The Magistrates of Edinburgh did not molest, or, for as ever as I could learn, even blame it. And when, in the House of Commons, the question of parliamentary reform was so fully discussed, on the 6th and 7th of May 1793, in which the subject of a national convention was introduced and reprobated, the slightest notice was not taken of the convention at Edinburgh, though it had assembled in the preceding December and published its proceedings, and had again assembled, seven days before that debate, for the purpose of collecting and forwarding many of the very petitions in favour of reform, which were then under discussion;—a business which it publicly avowed, and which many days prior to the debate was published in the London newspapers.

The next letter received from Mr. Skirring, so far as I recollect, was in the middle of October 1793: it was signed by him, as secretary to the society of the Friends of the People in Edinburgh, and not as secretary to the convention. It followed the society of the Friends of the People in London to send delegates to the ensuing convention of the Friends of the People at Edinburgh, appointed for the 19th of the same month. I showed the letter to two or three members who happened to be then in town, and they agreed with me that I ought to send an answer to the following effect:—Addressing Mr. Skirring, That on a subject so important as that of sending delegates to the convention at Edinburgh, it would be necessary to consult the society; but that the shortness of the time rendered it impossible to give proper notice, first for calling the committee, (which was not then sitting, and which alone could assemble the society) and then for calling a general meeting; the shortness of the time I represented as the more objectionable in that season of the year, when very few members were in town. I, however, told him that I had consulted some members on the subject, and they had agreed with me, without deciding on the propriety of the measure, that the notice was insufficient, and that therefore his request could not be complied with. I added, that it was highly probable some members of the Society, then in Scotland, would be present, and that whatever they agreed to I had no doubt the Society would confirm. I said Lord Lauderdale might perhaps attend. No person in London saw this answer after it was drawn up. It was entirely of my

OWN

own writing; and I think it was stated in it that it was made by a private personal communication from myself.

I afterwards understood that the Convention of Delegates from the Friends of the People in Scotland assembled accordingly on the 25th of October, and let, as they had done at their former meetings, two or three days. They confined themselves strictly, and I believe sincerely, to the business of Parliamentary Reform, and then adjourned for several months. Some after their adjournment, however, the Delegates from the Societies in London and other parts of England arrived. The Convention then re-assembled on the 19th of November; and it was not till after this period that it assumed the name of The British Convention instituted for the purpose of obtaining Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments, or adopted any part of the language or conduct which (with what justice I do not pretend to determine) have exposed it to so much animadversion and censure.

This is the whole of the correspondence, as far as I can recollect, that passed between the Friends of the People in London and the Convention, or Mr. Skirving, at Edinburgh. The correspondence that took place between Mr. Skirving and myself could not, from circumstances which occur in my mind, be very important. He sent me the printed minutes of the Convention, and I sent him the publications of the Friends of the People in London. The last time I wrote to him was about the end of October, acknowledging the receipt of some copies of Mr. Blair's Trial; and I perfectly remember concluding my letter with a hope that the Delegates from the Societies in London, who had then just departed to meet the Convention in Edinburgh, would not import into Scotland any of that intemperate spirit which had brought blame on the moderate and sincere Friends of Reform in England: I hoped that the Friends of the People in Scotland would continue to persevere with that prudence and moderation in the cause of Parliamentary Reform, which had so justly obtained them the approbation of the Friends to the measure in England.—This letter, I suppose, displeased Mr. Skirving, for he never after wrote to me, nor did I write to him.

Having now detailed the whole of the correspondence, to the best of my remembrance, between the Convention and the Friends of the People in London, and between Mr. Skirving and myself, I think it my duty to observe, without presuming to give any opinion on the conduct of the British Convention,

Convention, that a material distinction ought to be drawn between it and the Convention of the Friends of the People. The proceedings of the latter, at their meetings in December 1792 and May 1793, appear to me to have been such as the most timid Friend to Parliamentary Reform could not object to. Their proceedings at their meeting in October were, I believe, of the same description. When they assembled with the Delegates from England, indeed, another system seems to have been pursued. Their meetings had always for only three days at a time, and they were limited to be held only twice a-year. But after it became the British Convention, they then, and not till then, entered into all those measures at which the Magistrates and Government have expressed so much alarm; and it was not till then that they even declared decidedly in favour of Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments; it is therefore extremely material to remark, that no blame has yet been thrown on the Convention of the Friends of the People at Edinburgh; and that between the British Convention and the Friends of the People in London no correspondence of any kind ever took place, nor even any sort of communication between Mr. Stirling and myself after this institution.

I have the Honour to be,

Sir,

Your most humble obedient Servant,

DANIEL STUART.

To Charles Grey, Esq. M. P.

P. S. Since writing the above, I have seen the Second Report of the Secret Committee of the House of Commons, in which mention is made of two letters that had elapsed my memory. The first of these letters, containing a resolution of thanks, I never made any minute of, because those thanks were not voted to the Scotch Convention in particular, as might be imagined from the statement in the Report, but were passed generally to all Societies which had aided in the cause of Parliamentary Reform.—After the motion in the House of Commons, on the 6th of May 1793, the Society of the Friends of the People in London, on the 18th of the same month, agreed to the following resolution: “ That
“ the thanks of this Society be returned to the various Societies in correspondence with it, for their zeal and activity

" in the cause of Parliamentary Reform; and to express a
 " hope and wish that they will proceed with the same spirit,
 " industry, and temper, during the interval between the pre-
 " sent time and the meeting of the next Session of Parlia-
 " ment."—Besides sending copies of this resolution to the
 different Societies in England, it was resolved that copies of
 it should be sent to the chairmen of the Societies in Edin-
 burgh and Glasgow, requesting them to transmit the same to
 all the societies in Scotland with which they corresponded.
 The Convention at Edinburgh was considered, by me, not
 only as a Society with which the Friends of the People in
 London communicated, but as the best channel for convey-
 ing the resolution of thanks over Scotland; and I of course
 sent them a copy. But I do not find, nor do I believe, that
 I was instructed to address the resolution to the Convention, in
 preference to the Edinburgh Society of Friends of the Peo-
 ple.

With regard to the second letter mentioned in the Report,
 dated the 23d of July 1793, I do not in the slightest degree
 remember it; but from the passage there quoted I have not
 the least doubt of its being mine; it contains the language I
 have invariably held whenever the subject of a Convention
 has been mentioned. But it is impossible I at that time could
 have written as Secretary, either in the name of the Society,
 which was not then sitting, it having adjourned on the 4th of
 June 1793, without again meeting till the 23d of January
 1794; or in the name of the Committee, which did not meet
 from the 30th of April 1793 till the 17th of January 1794.
 And as neither the Society nor the Committee ever authori-
 sed me to correspond in their name, without their knowledge,
 the letter of the 23d of July must have been a private and
 personal one of my own. I find that on the 20th of that
 month I received a parcel of the printed minutes of the Con-
 vention, accompanied by a letter from Mr Stirling, in his
 own name only, and not in the name of any Society, in
 which I suppose he took that opportunity of wishing to know
 my opinion respecting a Convention in England. Of such pri-
 vate personal letters I have written many, but as I did not
 consider them to concern the Society I never kept copies of
 them. I am, however, certain, that if they were all publish-
 ed, none of them, or even any parts of them, could with jus-
 tice be censured.

The third letter mentioned in the Report is of the same
 private personal nature with the second: I think I wrote it in

* Printed among Papers of the London and Westminster Anti-Slavery Society in 1840.

facts, and I remember it the more particularly, as it was the last I sent to Mr. Skirving. I am very certain that when it is published in the Appendix, it will fully justify the account I have already given of it in the body of this letter.

Thursday, 4 o'Clock.

Appendix, No. 3.

S I R,

I HAVE the honour to inform the Friends of the People in London, that the General Convention of Delegates from the various Societies of the Friends of the People throughout Scotland, unanimously agreed on Thursday last, the third day of their sitting in this place, to address the Friends of the People in London, and the inclosed letter of address was accordingly ordered to be printed and transmitted.

I have taken upon me to direct the same to you, upon seeing your name at their resolutions, by this day's post; and to request you to communicate it at their next meeting.

I will transmit all the proceedings of the Convention so soon as the various minutes and resolutions are received from the Pres.

With great esteem,

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

W. SKIRVING, Secretary.

Edin. 19 Dec.

1791.

Samuel Whitbread, Jun. Esq.
M. P. London.

Appendix, No. 4.

Edinburgh, Dec. 12th.

AT a General Convention of the Delegates of the Friends of the People, held this day,

Colonel DALRYMPLE in the chair,

Resolved,

That it appears to this Convention that very great abuses have arisen in the government of this country, from a neglect of the genuine principles of the Constitution; that these abuses have of late grown to an alarming height, and produced great discontents.

Resolved, That the essential measures to be pursued, in order to remove these abuses, and effectually to do away their mischievous consequences, are,

1st. To secure the freedom of election, and an equal representation of the people in parliament.

2d. To secure to the people a frequent exercise of their right of electing their representatives.

Resolved, That for the purpose of accomplishing these constitutional objects, the proper and legal method is that of applying by petition to parliament.

Resolved, That such a speedy and complete redress of our present grievances will most effectually be obtained by the joint co-operation of every Briton who yet retains the spirit and will to be free, this Convention will, as far as their principles and objects allow them, co-operate with the Society of the Friends of the People in London.

Resolved, That this resolution, along with those voted at a former Convention, be transmitted by the chairman to the Society of the Friends of the People in London.

(Signed) WILLIAM DALRYMPLE, Chairman.
WILLIAM SKIRVING, Secretary.

Appendix, No. 5.

The Minutes of the proceedings of the General Convention of the Delegates from the Societies of the Friends of the People throughout Scotland, at their several sittings in Edinburgh, on the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth of December, 1792.—Edinburgh: Printed by J. Robertson, No. 39, South Bridge, *Ann* 1793.

Baxter's Hall, Edin. Tuesday, Dec. 12. 1792.

AT noon, this day, the Delegates from the several Societies of the Friends of the People, throughout Scotland, assembled very numerously in their Convention Room here, in compliance with the following public advertisement.

SIR,

THE Convention of Delegates from the various Societies of THE FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE, in and about Edinburgh, who assembled here upon the twenty-first instant, expressed an unanimous wish for a General Convention of Delegates, from the various Societies in Scotland, established upon similar principles.

If it shall meet the approbation of the majority of the Societies, they propose to hold a Convention, upon the eleventh day of December next, in the city of Edinburgh.

The various advantages which will result to the whole, from a consolidation of our exertions through, are too obvious to be detailed. If you approve of this measure, and resolve to send delegates, inform us in course of post. It shall be our care to prepare a proper place for meeting, of which we shall give you timely and regular notice. Be pleased to direct your letters to our Secretary, Mr William Skirving, Head of the Horse-pond, Edinburgh.

By order of the Committee of Convention.

W. SKIRVING, Secy.

EDINBURGH, }
Nov. 25. 1792. }

P. S. W's

P.S. We earnestly request of your Society, to communicate this intimation to any Societies in your neighbourhood, of whose existence, in consequence of their not having published their declaration of principles, we may be ignorant.

A Convention of Delegates from every Society of the Friends of the People in Scotland, will be held at Edinburgh, in Bauer's Hall, in James's Court, on Tuesday the sixteenth of December next, at Twelve o'Clock Noon, against which time the General Committee shall have every thing prepared for the reception of the Delegates.

After a short conversation, Messrs. Bell, Muir, and Skirving, the present President, Vice-President, and Secretary, of the Edinburgh Association of the Friends of the People, were requested to officiate in these several capacities, until the powers of the Delegates should be verified.

Mr. HUGH BELL in the Chair.

The commissions to the several Delegates were produced; and read. The roll being made up, was called over, name by name, and intimation several times made, that if the name of any delegate had been omitted, it should now be given in. The Convention was then declared assembled; and the President, Vice-President, and Secretary retired.

General Convention assembled.

Some conversation took place relative to office-bearers and committees, and the impropriety of having these permanent. The Convention at length, on the motion of Lord Dair, resolved, That they would elect a President each day, or sitting; and, upon a motion by Thomas Muir, younger, Esq. of Hammerhill, it was resolved, That the Secretary should be permanent.

Lieut.-Col. Dalrymple of Fardel was then unanimously called to the Chair; and W. Skirving of Strathcuddy elected Secretary.

Col.

Col. Determann in the Chair

After some motions relating to order, moved by Lord Duggan and Mr. Fowler, and ordered to be laid upon the table as unwise, the Convention proceeded to a declaration of principles; and a series of resolutions being presented by John Northland, Esq. Advocate, the Convention, upon his motion, resolved itself into a Committee, to consider the same, and to report against to-morrow's sitting.

Refused the Communion.

Col. DALLMAN in the Chair

Mr. Muir moved, That the two motions made by Capt. Johnston, resolved and published by the General Association of the Friends of the People, in and about Edinburgh, be also adopted, and published, as the resolutions of the General Convention. The same was agreed to unanimously; and a copy, drawn up in a proper form, was ordered to be laid before the Convention to-morrow. A motion was made to adjourn till 6 o'clock in the evening; but, as this was opposed, it was agreed to adjourn till 10 o'clock next forenoon.

Continued from p. 10

The Delegates assented conform to the adjournment. Lord Dacre moved, That the President of the former day take the Chair till the meeting was full, and that then they should elect their President for the day, agreeable to their former resolution; and the same was adopted.

Col. Beaumont Is the Chief

Lord Durr, as ordered yesterday, gave in to the table the following motions :

1. That it shall not be a rule, that when a motion is made and seconded, it shall be decided upon before any other be heard.
2. That when a subject is introduced as the business for consideration, it shall be permitted to any person to propose what motions thereon he shall think it is proper should be adopted; and that when all the motions are laid on the table which any wish to propose, a vote shall be put, which proposal shall be first taken into consideration.

- 1.
- Time**

3. That when any business is under consideration, any incidental motion may be introduced; and if the meeting choose not to take it into consideration at that moment, the meeting shall declare this, by resolving to *pass on to the ordinary course of business*.

4. That any motion may be discussed the day it is proposed; but that it shall not be finally decided or published to the world, till it be confirmed next day.

The meeting being now full, Lord Daer was unanimously called to the Chair.

Lord Daer in the Chair.

Mr. Blair rose, to read a printed paper, which had been sent from Ireland, intitled, *Address of the United Liffordians in Dublin, to the Delegates for Reform in Scotland*; the reading of it was opposed in point of form, the same not being before the house; but the address being declared a masterly performance, and a declaration that afforded the most flattering evidence of the union and philanthropy of the friends of reform in Ireland, the reading of it was unversally called for. After reading the same, the Convention passed to the order of the day.

Lord Daer being obliged to leave the meeting, the last proposer was called to the Chair as a matter of course.

Col. DAKINFIELD in the Chair.

The report of the Committee was called for, the resolutions adopted in committee were read, and debated paragraph by paragraph, when the following were, with great unanimity, resolved in convention, and ordered to be published.

Resolved, That this Convention, taking under consideration the insidious, wicked, and inflammatory artifices, employed by the enemies of all reforms, to misrepresent and calumniate the Friends of the People, as the promoters of public discord, and advocates for an unjust and absurd violation of private property, by an equal division—Think it incumbent upon them to declare, that they hold all such unprincipled designs in utter detestation and abhorrence, and that they will maintain the established constitution of Great Britain, on its genuine acknowledged principles, consisting of three estates—King, Lords, and Commons.

Resolved,

Resolved, That the members of this convention will, to the utmost of their power, concur in aiding and strengthening the hands of the civil magistrates throughout this kingdom, to repress riot and tumult, and all attempts whatsoever to disturb the tranquillity, happiness, and good order of society.

Resolved, That it appears to this convention, that very great abuses have arisen in the government of this country, from a neglect of the genuine principles of the constitution; that these abuses have of late grown to an alarming height, and produced great dissensions.

Resolved, That the essential measures to be pursued, in order to remove these abuses, and effectually to do away their mischievous consequences, are,

First, To restore the freedom of election, and an equal representation of the people in Parliament. And,

Secondly, To secure to the people a frequent exercise of their right of electing their representatives.

Resolved, That, for the purpose of accomplishing their constitutional objects, the proper and legal method is, that of applying by petition to Parliament.

Resolved, That these resolutions be printed in the Scotch and English newspapers; and also be printed in hand bills, for general distribution among the Affiliated Friends of the People, in different parts of Scotland.

Adjourned till six o'clock in the evening.

Convention Hall, Wednesday, 6 o'clock.

Col. DAUNTNEY in the Chair.

The Secretary presented the plan of organization for individual Societies, for district associations, and for general conventions; together with a written motion by Mr. Fowler, for a Committee of Publication, for the purpose of communicating instruction. The same were received; and Messrs. Wilkes and Fowler were requested to bring them before the body at a proper opportunity.

Mr. Muir and others brought forward the following motions, which were unanimously adopted; namely,

Resolved, That this Convention do address the Friends of the People at London.

Resolved, That the thanks of the Convention be returned to
Messrs.

Mrs. Grey, Erskine, the Earl of Lauderdale, the Marquis of Lonsdown, Col. M'Leod, Lord Deer, and Col. Dalrymple, for their patriotic services in the cause of the people: to J. H. Tooke, Esq. for his masterly support of freedom: to the Hon. Major Maitland, Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Bell, and Capt. Johnston, for their important assistance to overturn corruption; also the Right Hon. Charles Fox, for his determined speech at the last meeting of the Whig Club; and lastly, to all those members of the House of Commons, who have supported in Parliament the cause of the People.

Agreed to Capt. Johnston's two resolutions of yesterday, which are as follow:

Resolved, That it be recommended to each Society of the Friends of the People, to expunge from the roll of their members, the name or names of any individual or individuals, who may have acted illegally, tumultuously, or in any way to the disturbance of the public peace.

Resolved, That any individual or individuals, of the Societies of the Friends of the People, whose conduct may have been legal and orderly, and who may be persecuted by the arm of power, for adhering to the cause of the people, be defended by the united strength of the Friends of the People.

The five following motions which Mr Stirling proposed, were ordered to lie on the table:

I. That the Friends of the People in Britain, should unite in the application to Parliament, both as to the extent of reform to be demanded, and as to the manner of executing their petition for the same.

II. That, therefore, this Convention should send two or three deputies to London, to concert a common plan with the Friends of the People there, advising always with the general committees at Edinburgh, Glasgow, &c.

III. That these committees, while the deputies remain at London, should meet weekly, in order to instruct the deputies from time to time.

IV. That when a common plan of operation is thus procured, a General Convention be called, to approve or amend the same, and particularly to direct them in the manner in which the petitions shall be expressed and presented to Parliament.

V. That the Convention recommend, That the Friends of

the Constitution and of the People, be in the mean time diligent, in forming themselves every where into societies, in order to give the greater energy to their petitions.

Mr. Allen proposed the following to be added to the resolutions already adopted :

That, in order to supersede the necessity of constantly resorting to the aid of a military force, it be recommended by the convention, to the Associated Friends of the People, in the different parts of the country, to hold themselves in readiness to support the civil magistrates, when required, for the suppression of any popular tumults that may arise in their neighbourhood.

This motion was deferred, on account of its importance till next day.

Mr. Blair moved to appoint a committee of finance; and the following regulations were unanimously adopted; namely,

Resolved, That each district association, shall have a committee for regulating their own respective finances—That the several committees of finance, shall correspond with the Edinburgh committee of finance, as the committee also of finance for the General Convention, and report to this committee, as such, their respective contributions for the public interest.

Resolved, That this committee of general finance, in Edinburgh, shall lay before each convention a state of the receipts and expenditure.

Resolved, That the Convention, on the last day of their sitting, appoint a committee of audit, for the purpose of inspecting the accounts of the Convention's committee of finance; and report the result of their examination to the Convention.

A motion that had been formerly made verbally, and adopted in the resolutions, to petition Parliament, was refused, and the Convention resolved to petition Parliament with all convenient speed; and a committee was appointed to draw up a schedule of said petition, and to present the same to-morrow.

Adjourned, till ten o'clock to-morrow.

P

Continued

Convention Hall, Thursday, 10 October.

The delegates convened, conducted to adjournment; Col. Dalrymple in the chair.

Mr. Morland moved to have the two following resolutions added to the former ones :

Resolved, That since a speedy and complete redress of our present grievances will be most effectually obtained by the joint co-operation of every Briton, who yet retains the spirit and the will to be free, this Convention will, as far as its principles and objects will allow them, co-operate with the Society of the Friends of the People in London.

Resolved, That this resolution, along with those voted at a former sitting of this convention (page 14 and 15,) be transmitted, by their chairman, to the Society of the Friends of the People in London.

And the same was ordered accordingly.

Mr. Fowler read the copy of the petition to Parliament which had been ordered; and it met with general approbation, as to the matter of it; and was committed back to the committee, to be put into the form appointed by the House of Commons, and thereafter transmitted to the different Societies for approbation.

Mr. Wilson then brought forward the plan of organization, for the different bodies of the Friends of the People; after reading over the whole of it, the Convention recognized the right of individual Societies, to regulate their own internal order, and resolved "That these words be inserted, "with power to any two towns, in which there is a Society of the Friends of the People, to call a General Convention".

Mr. Morland next brought forward the following motion, proposed by Mr. Ritchie of Edinburgh:

Moved, That the Secretary to this Convention, transmit to the Secretary of Burghs, associated for the purpose of obtaining a Reform in the internal government of the Royal Burroughs of Scotland, a letter including the resolutions, explaining

* The plan of organization to be revised and published by the Edinburgh Association.

urging the declaration of principles drawn up and published by this Convention, and recommending to the Bargesmen, if the above declaration of principles meets their approbation, to co-operate with the Friends of the People, in the common cause of obtaining the great objects of reform expressed in their resolutions.

In place of this motion, the following was submitted by Mr. Skirving, and seconded by Captain Johnston and others:

Moved, That if any members of the Association for Borough Reform, apply to the Friends of the People to be admitted, they will be received cordially. But the Convention can admit no Societies, but Societies of the Friends of the People.

After a long debate, the votes were taken, and the first motion was negatived, and the second adopted.

Upon the motion of Dr. Yule, an address to the citizens of Britain at large, was unanimously resolved, and a Committee appointed to draw up the same.

The following motion, submitted by Mr. Ellis, was likewise unanimously resolved:

That it be recommended to the people, to form associations in every county, composed of members from the different Societies in that county, in order to ascertain the state of population, the number of electors, the quantity of taxes paid, the parial taxes, and the local grievances of that county. That they publish the same, or transmit them to the Committee of Finance at Edinburgh.

Mr. Fowler then moved, "That the thanks of the Convention be returned to Conner Lindsay of Colbridge, and the other Friends of Liberty, who, in a liberal and manly manner, related the aspersions thrown on the conduct and intentions of the FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE, in the late meeting of the fourteen incorporated trades of Edinburgh;" the same was unanimously agreed to, and the Convention expressed their sense of the benefit which was done to the cause by the patriotic conduct of that meeting at large.

Capt.

1820. 2. Capt. JENNETON in the Chair.

Referred the consideration of Mr. Allen's motion of previous day; when sundry members thinking that it was expressed substantially in the second general resolution, (page 150) now printed, Mr. Allen agreed to withdraw it.

It was then resolved, that the thanks of the Convention be given to the Secretary, Mr. Skirving, for his unremitting application to the business of the Society; and that a small Committee be appointed to assist him in extending, and publishing the proceedings of this Convention.

John Miller, Esq. Advocate, called the attention of the Convention, to certain resolutions in the Edinburgh Herald of the day, of which the following is a copy:

"We whose names are herewith subscribed, being unanimously and decidedly of opinion, That for the security and happiness of all classes of our fellow countrymen, for the maintenance of our own rights and liberties, and for those of our posterity, it is, in the present moment, incumbent upon us, and all good subjects, to give to the executive government an effectual support in counteracting the efforts of sedition, and in suppressing, in their beginnings, all tumults or riots, on whatever pretence they may be excited; do hereby publicly declare our determination to take all such steps for these purposes as are within the limits of our duty in the several spheres in which the Constitution of our country has placed us, and to afford, by our individual exertions, that active assistance to the authority of the lawful Magistrate, and to the maintenance of the Established Government, which is at all times due from the subjects of this free and happy kingdom; but which we feel to be more peculiarly necessary at a time when insidious attempts have been made to deceive and mislead the people."

"With these sentiments, and to this intent, we are

"RESOLVED, AND DO DECLARE,

"That we will stand by the Constitution with our lives and fortunes.

"That we will jointly and individually use our utmost endeavours to counteract all seditious attempts, and, in particular, all associations for the publication or dispersion of seditious

fious and inflammatory writings, or tending to excite disorders and tumults within this part of the kingdom.

" That we will, on every occasion, exert ourselves on the first appearance of tumult or disorder, to maintain the public peace, and to act in support of the Civil authority for suppressing all riots and tumults that may be excited.

" And whereas, we are of opinion, that it would greatly conduce to the maintenance of peace and good order, that means should be used to give such just and proper information to our fellow-subjects as may tend to remove the false and delusive opinions that have been industriously circulated amongst them, and to impress on their minds a proper sense of the invaluable blessings secured to this nation by our happy Constitution : we have agreed diligently to promote the circulation of such writings as may contribute to this important end."

Having read these resolutions, he moved, that the Convention do approve of the same, and in testimony of such approbation, that the President and Secretary, with as many of the delegates as still remain in town, shall subscribe the paper now lying in Goldsmith's Hall.

Mr. Morrell *seconded the motion.*

Some delegates, particularly Mr. Chittie of Laurencekirk, doubted the propriety of the motion. Notwithstanding of which it was resolved, that the Delegates, in parties of eight or ten at a time should go down and subscribe the same ; adding to their names, Friend of the People, or Delegate, &c.

Upon the president and a few more withdrawing for that purpose, Mr. John Clark, Architect, was called to the chair, when after some conversation, the meeting was adjourned till six o'clock in the evening.

The Delegates having once more assembled conform to adjournment, Mr. Elliot (born Dundee, was unanimously called to the Chair.

Mr. Bisset is the chair.

The Convention resolved, That a great number of their resolutions and minutes be printed, and sent to all the Societies, and recommending the same to the direction of the Committee of Finance

Finance, at Edinburgh; and Mr. Muir moved, that the Secretary be enjoined to give sufficient notice to the Edinburgh Committee of Finance, that they were likewise appointed the Committee of Finance for the General Convention; and upon the Secretary's motion, the following instructions drawn up by Mr. Muir, were unanimously recommended to their consideration.

To the Committee of Finance of the Edinburgh Convention.

"The General Convention has intrusted each particular Society, to form a Committee of Finance, for managing their own private and public contributions. The Convention has requested you to take the management of the expenses which their sittings here may have incurred. In this department of their business, they consider you as their Committee. The particular Societies will transmit to you their respective proportions of the general expense. The first General Convention has left each particular Society to the freedom of their own will, in regard to the different assessments they may lay upon their members."

"You will keep a regular account of the public expenditure and outlay, which you will lay before each general contribution for their examination."

"As soon as you have collected the amount of the general expense, inform each particular Society by a circular letter, in order that the Societies may, without delay transmit to you their respective proportions."

A respectable member informed the Convention, that a Society had been just now formed upon the principles of the Friends of the People, whose members in general, were gentlemen of landed property to a very considerable extent.

Mr. Morland moved, that the thanks of the Convention be returned to Mr. Fowler, for his eminent services in the business of the Convention; and the thanks were given unanimously.

It was then moved by Mr. Drummond, to thank the country Delegates, for their ardent zeal in the cause, manifested by coming up so numerously at this inclement season, and for their disinterested conduct during the sittings; and this was done with heart-felt satisfaction.

Mr.

Mr. Biffin in the Chair, begged leave to move the return of thanks from the country Delegates, to those in the town and neighbourhood, for the care and attention to the cause which they had manifested, in assembling so opportunely and properly a Convention of the Societies of the Friends of the People. And to this the country Delegates heartily concurred.

The President then addressed the Delegates, exhorting them to persevere in the great and good cause in which they had embarked, until their object should be completely attained.

The warm approbation, with which the Convention received this sentiment, sufficiently expressed their concurrence in it, and their firm determination to persevere.

Adjourned.

W. SKIRVING, *Secretary.*

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APPENDIX

TO THE

SECOND REPORT

FROM THE COMMITTEE OF SECRET.

(Appendix A. (N^o 1.)

PAPER distributed amongst the Friends.

FRIENDS AND BRETHREN,

It is with the greatest pleasure that your Countrymen are informed, That such is your attachment and love to *them*, and to your Native Country, that you manfully and firmly resolve not to leave it upon any terms contrary to those upon which you were at first engaged. Your Countrymen love you, and their hearts would be as much wounded to part with you, as *your's* would be to be separated from *them*. They will know that they are safe under the protection of their *Fathers*, their *Sons*, their *Brothers* in arms, and they neither wish nor desire any other Defenders. They hope and believe that your hearts are filled with the same sentiments.

The great mass of the PEOPLE from amongst whom you have been indited, have been represented to you as your enemies,—Believe not the assertion. They have been taught to consider you as foes; but they do not fear finding friends amongst their brethren.

Their cause and yours is the same:—They are poor, but they have honest hearts; hearts which sympathize in your *cause*: they look for the same friendship and the same sympathy in you.

[A]

+

THEY

They rejoice to hear, That you are becoming daily more convinced of the great Truth, that the LAW ought to be the same to the Highlander and to Lowlander, to the rich and to the poor, and that no man can be compelled to take up arms, by any authority whatsoever, unless his own inclinations prompt him to do so.

That truth has been hitherto carefully concealed from you, but it is not the less certain.—The will of your *lord* cannot, WITHOUT your OWN CONSENT, separate you from your families and friends, although many of you may have experienced the exertions of such a power, however unjust, and however contrary to LAW.

We respect and admire that principle which induces you, (though necessity has compelled you to take up arms) still to persist in remaining to defend your friends at home, and not to quit a country which holds pledged so dear.

Where YOU are gone, where is their defence?—They may be either left without protection, or may soon see their country overrun by FARRIOR TROOPS, such as in time past have already shed the blood of your ancestors, without provocation and without remorse, and who would feel perhaps as little compassion in shedding theirs.

PERHAPS for every deed of horror, these foreign mercenaries may violate the chastity of your Wives, your Sisters, and your Daughters; and when *disgrace* is satiated, cruelty may refuse its place in their hearts, as experience has too well and too fatally shewn, and Friends, Parents, Children, Brethren, may be involved in one common slaughter.

The cruel massacres of GLENCOE cannot yet be forgotten; are there not amongst you, whose freedoms perished *above*?—Their hearts, throbbing with kindness and hospitality, were pierced with the daggers of their treacherous guests; and the feast, prepared by the hand of unsuspecting friendship, was closed with a feast of blood!—Such is the return for kindness and hospitality!—Such the protection which your families have to expect!—!!!

How will they then look around in vain for your protecting care, when perhaps you are fighting at a distance in a for-

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rich land?—But they hope you will not forsake them.—Stay, Oh stay, and defend your families and your friends!

FOR THAT PURPOSE ALONE YOU WERE ENLISTED.—They are ready to come forward for you in the vindication of your Rights.

Thousands join in the same sentiments with you, and ardently wish for your continuance amongst them. The circumstances which might require you to quit your country have not yet taken place.—No invasion has yet happened.—You cannot be compelled to go.—Leave not your country.—Assert your independence.—Your countrymen will look up to you as their protectors and guardians, and will in their turn lift up their arms to protect and assist You.—

DUNDEE, APRIL 13th 1794.

Appendix A. (N^o 2.)

To the Landholders of the County of Perth.

Gentlemen,

Observing an Advertisement in the Edinburgh Newspapers requiring you to meet here on the 11th current, to take into consideration a plan of the Executive Government for the internal defense of the country, we, a number of the inhabitants of Perth and neighbourhood, consisting of upwards of three hundred effective men, deeply impressed with the danger which threatens the nation; and animated with that Patriotism which proclaims to the world that the safety of the People is the supreme law, make a voluntary offer of our services to assist in protecting the Liberties of the People from any encroachments, either from hostile invaders, or more dangerous internal foes, pledging ourselves on the one hand to resist every attempt to invade private property, and on the other to crush and subvert every unlawful combination of the rich against the poor; and being sensible that the protection of the people's liberties is a task of such importance, that it ought to be committed to those only who are capable of discerning the eternal laws of justice, and of feeling and acting according to the force of principle, we pledge ourselves that none but true men, answering to this description, shall be al-

Printed and Published by [A. A.] Glasgow and London: Printed by a

lowed to enter our land; because, independent of the palpa-
ble absurdity of committing our defence to criminals, we dis-
dain the mean shift of crimping, and sweeping persons.

--It is on the foregoing principles that we offer our services
to the country, on the following terms, as a body of Infantry
Troops.

First, We consider these principles as the best security for
perfecting order; and as military law must be very dis-
agreeable, and is wholly unnecessary to men of our peaceful
habits of life, we therefore require that every offence shall
be tried by a jury chosen from among ourselves.

Second, As we are for the most part settled in business, or
have families of our own, we must therefore insist, that unless
an invasion shall take place in a neighbouring
part of the country we shall not be carried out of the country
without our own consent, declared by a council chosen by our-
selves, and held for that purpose.

Third, We require to have the sole power of choosing our
own officers from among ourselves, and of cashiering, and pla-
cing them in the ranks, at every month's end, if neces-
sary.

Fourth, We require that the County, or Government, shall
furnish us with arms and military stores, together with e-
very other equipment necessary for the purposes of defence.

On the other hand, we engage to find sergeants in our own
body, qualified to train and discipline the men; and shall
require no pay, unless called out to actual service.

This plan we consider as greatly preferable to that of rais-
ing troops of Cavalry, as proposed in some countries, for the
following reasons:

First That the horses being taken from the purposes of a-
griculture, must be very hurtful to the country.

Second, Cavalry are extremely expensive; and in addition
to the present enormous burden of foreign troops, together
with our own, will fall heavy on government.

Third, They will require six or nine months to train them;
whereas we engage to be ready in four weeks from the time
we are embodied, for actual service.

Fourth, Without an adequate body of Infantry, Cavalry

are wholly incapable to repel an invasion, and are only fit for pursuing a flying enemy, or running down an unarmed multitude.

Fifth, We engage, when properly trained, to bear off double our own number of the best Cavalry that can be brought against us.

We also promise to double or triple our number, upon a day's notice being given, if thought necessary.

The Committee are instructed, by a general meeting of the Volunteers, to adhere to their former principles, which are exactly the same as presented to the General of the Landholders.

(Signed) Robert Henderson, Shoemaker.
 Matthew Calderwood, Esq.
 John Johnston, Weaver.
 David Smith, ditto.
 James Halkman, ditto.
 Robert Sands, ditto.
 Andrew Fickethley, Shoemaker.

(C O P Y.)

Minutes of General Meeting, 11. April 1794.

The Prefes produced a letter which had been handed to him, signed by Robert Henderson, Robert Sands, Matthew Calderwood, David Smith, Andrew Fickethley, and Thomas Smith, relative to an offer of their services, and of others who had previously presented an unsigned petition to the meeting (but which had been withdrawn) for the internal defence of the country: Which letter being read, the meeting sent to the Committee appointed for carrying into execution the resolutions of this meeting, relative to the raising of two or more troops of Fencible Cavalry for the internal defence of the Country.

Copy Letter referred to in Minutes of 11. April 1794.

To the President of the Meeting of Landholders of the County of Perth, presently assembled in the Sheriff Court Room.

Puckest,

We sent in a number of proposals into court to be protected by Colonel Eskine, which we understand are thrown out because they have no signatures affixed: We are deposed by these persons, who offer their services, and are ready to appear in open court to give every satisfaction respecting the matter; we therefore request that you will bring forward the proposals, and we shall be ready to wait on you when called upon. President, we are yours. (Signed) Robert Henderson, Robert Sands, Matthew Calderwood, David Smith, Andrew Fitzpatrick, Thomas Smith.

P. S. The deposition is in Mr Murray's, at the back of the jail.

Half past Five
o'clock, P. M.

Minutes of Committee, 10th April 1794.

The Committee having examined the letter which was referred to their consideration by the general meeting yesterday, which letter has a reference to a previous petition presented to the meeting of yesterday, but afterwards withdrawn, they find it impossible to deliberate on that subject at present, neither having the original petition, nor any plan respecting the mode of internal defence pointed out by the petitioners, before them; they therefore desire Mr Paine to deliver a copy of this last resolution of the Committee to the petitioners, so as they may transmit their original petition, and may communicate any plan which they have to offer relative to the internal defence of the country, which will be paid due attention to by the Committee at their next meeting.

(C O P Y)

Minutes of Committee, 25. April 1794.

The Committee again considered the letter signed by six persons, and received the original petition there referred to, with an addition since made to it, and the subscription of seven individuals affixed thereto; and were informed by these persons that the resolutions contained in the original petition were agreed to at a meeting, called by means of a printed

band bill passed up in the streets of Perth, and held on the North Inch last Wednesday evening; at which meeting they were also informed that the same persons resolved on presenting a petition to his Majesty, in behalf of Mann, Gould, and the other persons who have lately been sentenced to be transported for the crime of sedition; the Committee are of opinion, that zeal displayed by individuals, in offering their services to defend their country against the unjust aggression of the cruel and rapacious foreign enemies we are now engaged in war with, is commendable in them as British subjects, warmly attached to their king, and to our glorious and happy constitution: But, after considering the plan suggested, they are of opinion, that it is liable to such objections that they cannot give it any countenance or support; but they beg to recommend to those individuals, now tendering their services for the purpose of repelling the meditated attacks of the inhuman, ferocious, and irreligious rulers of that unhappy and devoted country, France, either to make an offer of their services individually to the officers of the Perthshire Fencible Cavalry, or, if they prefer being in a corps of Infantry, to enlist into some of the regiments of foot now raising. They also beg to inform the individuals who have thus professed their attachment to the country, that it will be expected they will use their best endeavours, by avoiding all tumultuous meetings, to preserve good order in the town of Perth and its vicinity.

Appendix B. (N^o 1.)

*Secretary London Corresponding Society, to Norwich Gas-
tineal Society.*

Fellow Citizens,

London, 17th Oct. 1793.

WE have to acknowledge at once, your favour of the 3d September, and 14th instant. Multiplicity of business prevented my answering your letter; but will now inform you that the spirit shewn in it gave great satisfaction to our society at large. The rejoices for the capture of Valenciennes were not confined to Norwich alone. The ignorant every where

where else throughout the nation betrayed their imbecility on the occasion. But the taking of a town, the slaughtering of thousands of human beings, the laying waste whole provinces, or the enslaving a nation (however great evils they may be) can only retard for a small space of time, the progress of truth and reason:—Be not disheartened, therefore—pursue your plan, instruct mankind, and constitutionally set your face against existing abuses: Be assured that many are our friends, who only wait a favourable opportunity to openly join us, while our enemies have much amused themselves and their ends by their arbitrary exertions. Despotism is at its last grip—One or two campaigns more will terminate its existence.

We are glad to see that you begin to make a proper use of delegation: Where bodies of men are too numerous to be convened easily on every occasion, delegation is the best, and indeed only way to obtain the general opinion. Scotland, improving on the idea, have not only sanctioned their own delegates, but also invite those of every other Society to attend a kind of Convention, which is to be held at Edinburgh on the 29th instant. The inclosed paper, which I, previous to the communicating your letter to our Committee (which will meet only to-morrow) make haste to transmit to you, will show you that your Society is included in the general invitation to send delegates to that meeting—which we exhort you to do, if you possibly can.—I firmly believe our Society will not miss the opportunity of doing the same.

We have just published a new edition of *The Englishman's Rights*, or a dialogue between a Barrister and a Jurymen, being an excellent work, published first by Sir John Hawles, Knight, Solicitor General to King William the Third. It is a book that ought to be in the possession of every one, as it contains the *rights and duties of a Jurymen*.—Send us word if you can read a certain number of them in your neighbourhood—we sell them only three shillings per dozen, but the retail price is fourpence apiece. I am most sincerely, my Fellow Citizens, and brethren in a good cause, your humble servant.

Appendix

Appendix B. (N^o 2.)

Copy of a Letter from the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society, to Norwich.

London, January 11. 1794.

Fellow Citizens,

I have just received a letter from Citizen Margaret, at Edinburgh, with some of the Edinburgh Gazetteers, where you will see that Citizen Skirving is found guilty, and sentenced for Fourteen Years Transportation to Botany Bay. Margaret's trial comes next; he meets it with great firmness and resolution. I have no time to make my comments on the proceedings, but I think our opponents are cutting their own throats as fast as they can.—Now is the time for us to do something worthy of Asia. The brave Defenders of Liberty south of the English Channel are performing wonders, driving their enemies before them like chaff before the whirlwind. Margaret tells me, that he has not time to write to you just now, but he hopes to have time very soon, when his trial is over, and imprisoned in a prison. The London Corresponding Society is to have a General Meeting, and an Anniversary Dinner, on Monday the 11th instant, at the Globe Tavern, Strand. I have sent you some of Margaret's and Skirving's indictment, with two copies of a pamphlet on *Revolutions* is a member of our Society, the author; if you approve of it you may put it in press, and be a great saving to many families, also a diminution of the Revenue, for every one brewing their own beer pay no duty for it. Excuse haste. I still remain, &c.

(Signed) —————

Appendix B. (N^o 3.)

Copy of a Letter from Mr Margaret to the Norwich United Society.

Spithead, the 10th of March 1794.

Worthy Friends, and Fellow Citizens,

Our Ray here being longer than was at first expected, I avail myself of that delay to acknowledge the receipt of Two-

† Printed and sold by the Author, at the Sign of the Sun, in Pall-mall, London.

ty Pounds from your Society, which have been delivered to me by Thomas Hardy, our Secretary, to whom you had remitted them, and who has been down here purposely to see me, and make some arrangements for the future, but which business has called him back to London before any thing could be settled between us.—At first he seemed to think that the money was meant by you to be divided among the Four who are now suffering together; but, on my explaining him that those gentlemen were infinitely better off than myself in that respect, inasmuch that they are continually receiving private presents, and are moreover supported by many Noblemen and rich Members of Parliament, these latter seeking only (I much fear) to make a party affair of it, that he gave the money to my own disposal. If, however, you meant otherwise, your intention shall be complied with immediately on its being made known to me.—So much for pecuniary affairs.—

This morning 10 ships of war have left Spithead for the Channel, and it is here reported that the Brigs fleet is out: Rumour, always manifesting things, says there are 70 sail of French at sea; if so, there must be a number of transports among them, and a defeat may probably be the consequence.—For God's sake, my worthy Friends, do not relax in the cause of Freedom—Continue as you have begun—Consolidate your own Societies—Unite with others—Persevere, and make no doubt but power or date your endeavours will be crowned with success. I have also to thank you for the affectionate Address I received from you. Be assured that my utmost ambition will ever be to deserve your confidence and your esteem. The tide of Fortune, however strongly it may run against our cause at present, must soon have a turn: The eyes of mankind will naturally open—when their pockets empty, and their blood spills, they will ask each other, for whom are we thus sacrificing ourselves, and murdering others? What advantage results to us from all this expence and slaughter? And by interfering in the government of another country, do we not set other nations an example to interfere with our own Governments, and to model it as they think proper? Should they do so, Popery and Despotism must be our lot—May gracious Providence avert it; may we rather all to a man be determined to live free or die!

In

In my exile, nothing would afflict me so much as to hear that my country was enslaved, and that my countrymen hugged their chains. I trust however the national spirit of Britain will prevent it. Adieu, my dear Friends, and ever remember
Your faithful

M. MARGABOT.

P. S.—This day a mock debate concerning our sentences is to take place in P———.

Appendix C.

Extracts from the Book containing the Proceedings of the Constitutional Society.

AT a Meeting held at the Secretary's, Took's Court, Chancery Lane, Friday, 22d March 1792.

Resolved, that the Thanks of this Society be given to Mr Thomas Paine, for his most masterly Book, intitled "The Rights of Man," in which not only the mischievous sophistries of hireling scribblers are detected and exposed to merited ridicule, but many of the most important and beneficial political truths are stated, so irresistibly convincing as to promise the acceleration of that not very distant period, when usurping Borough sellers, and profligate Borough buyers, shall be deprived of what they impudently dare to call their property—the choice of the Representatives of the people.

The Constitutional Society express their satisfaction that so valuable a publication has proceeded from a member of that Society; and they fervently hope that the people of England will give that attention to the subjects discussed in Mr Paine's treatise, which their manifest importance so justly deserve.

Resolved, That the foregoing Resolutions, and all future proceedings of this Society, be regularly transmitted by the Secretary to all our corresponding Constitutional societies in England, Scotland, and France.

Resolved, That the above Resolutions be published in the papers.

At a Meeting, 14 April 1797.

Resolved, That the Resolutions of this Society, recommending Paine's book, "The Rights of Man," and published in several of the papers, be re-published in the following; viz, General Evening, Morning Post, World, English Chronicle, Starboner, Leeds, York, Bristol, Nottingham, and Birmingham.

At a Meeting, 12d July 1797.

Resolved, That the original and translation of an Address communicated by the Reverend Doctor Townes, from the Society at Nants, be entered on the books of this Society.

The translation is entered.

At a Meeting, 28th March 1797.

Read the following letter from the Revolution Society at Norwich, to the London Society for Constitutional Information.

The Norwich Revolution Society wishes to open a communication with you at this time, when corruption has acquired a publicity in the Senate, which excites from the honour of the British nation renewed exertions for Parliamentary Reform. Without prejudging the probable event of such an application to the Legislature, this Society is willing to circulate the information, and to co-operate in the measures that may soon be adapted to further so desirable and so important an end. The Society is willing to hope the redress of every existing grievance at the hands of a Government reflecting from an extraordinary Convocation in 1885, of all who had, at any preceding time, been elected Representatives of the people, assisted by the hereditary counsellors of the nation, and a popular delegation from the metropolis; which national CONSTITUTIONAL Assembly exhibited for millennium a king of the house of Stuart. The opinions and principles of this Society are best explained by an appeal to their literary Representatives. To James Mackintosh, author of *Vindicta Gallica*, this Society offers the tribute of its approbation and gratitude, for the knowledge, the eloquence, and philosophical spirit with which he has explained, defended, and commented on the Revolution of

France. It intimates to all but to this only of his opinions, that "there are but two interests in society, those of the rich and "those of the poor."—If so, what chance have the latter?

Barely the interests of all the industrious, from the richest merchant to the poorest mechanic, are in every community the same—to lessen the numbers of the unproductive, to whose maintenance they contribute, and to do away such institutions and impôts as abridge the means of maintenance, by lessening the demand for labour, or by lessening its reward: As the means most conducive to this comprehensive end, the Norwich Revolution Society desires an equitable Representation of the people.

The Rights of Man, by Thomas Paine, and the Advice to the Privileged Orders, by Jos. Barlow, have also been read with attention, and circulated with avidity. They point out with clearness most of the abuses which have accumulated under the British Government; they attack with energy most of the prejudices which have tended to perpetuate them.

Internally our Society is thus organized:—Any person proposed and seconded by a member, is received, on paying an admission fine, and obliging himself to an annual contribution towards the purchase of books for the use of the Society, and for circulation among the confederated clubs. The members assemble twice, monthly. A committee of correspondence is periodically elected by ballot, to select books, and to conduct the other literary business. A committee of twelve is periodically named by acclamation, to attend severally the meetings of the various confederated clubs, which are invited in like manner to deposit a member to the monthly meetings of this.

The clubs are now forty in number, and more are expected to announce their adherence. The Norwich Revolution Society, proposing to extend this form of combination, recommends for admission into the London Society for Constitutional Information, twelve persons.

Norwich, 26. April 1791.

At a Meeting, 16th March 1791.

The Chairman of the Society for Constitutional Information, established at Manchester, having communicated to his

Society their relations of thanks to Thomas Paine, for the publication of his " Second Part of the Rights of Man; containing principle and practice."

Bell's Head Inn, Manchester, 12. March 1792.

At a meeting of the Manchester Constitutional Society, held this day, it was unanimously resolved,

That the thanks of this Society are due to Mr Thomas Paine, for the publication of his " Second Part of the Rights of Man, combining principle and practice," a work of the highest importance to every nation under heaven, but particularly to this, as containing excellent and practicable plans for an immediate and considerable reduction of the public expensures; for the prevention of wars; for the extension of our manufactures and commerce; for the education of the young; for the comfortable support of the aged; for the better maintenance of the poor of every description; and finally, for insisting **GREATLY, and WITHOUT DELAY,** the enormous load of taxes under which this country at present labours.

That this Society congratulate their country at large on the influence which Mr Paine's publications appear to have had in procuring the repeal of some oppressive taxes in the present Session of Parliament; and they hope, that this adoption of a small part of Mr Paine's ideas will be followed by the most strenuous exertions to accomplish a complete Reform in the present inadequate state of the Representation of the People; and that the other good plans of public benefit which Mr Paine has so powerfully recommended, will be speedily carried into effect.

Signed ———— President,
 ———— Secretary.

Ordered, That the Secretary return to the Chairman of the Society at Manchester the thanks of this Society, for his communication; at the same time assuring him that this Society does heartily concur in the above resolution.

Resolved, That the above resolutions be published in the papers.

At a Meeting, 13d March 1792.

Resolved, That the following be published in the Morning Chronicle, World, Post, Times, Argus, English Chronicle, and General Evening.

" Society for Constitutional Information, London, March
" 13d 1792. This Society having received the following and
" other communications from Sheffield;" viz.

Sheffield.

Society for Constitutional Information, [14. March 1792.]

This Society, composed chiefly of the manufacturers of Sheffield, began about four months ago, and is already increased to nearly TWO THOUSAND MEMBERS, and is daily increasing, exclusive of the adjacent towns and villages, who are forming themselves into similar societies.

Considering, as we do, that the want of knowledge and information in the general mass of the people has exposed them to numberless impositions and abuses, the exertions of this Society are directed to the acquisition of useful knowledge, and to spread the same as far as our endeavours and abilities can extend.

We declare that we have derived more true knowledge from the two works of Mr Thomas Paine, intitled " Rights of Man," Part the First and Second, than from any other author or subject. *The principles as well as the principles of Government is laid down in these works, in a manner so clear, and irresistibly convincing,* that this Society do hereby resolve to give their Thanks to Mr Paine for his two said publications, intitled " Rights of Man," Parts 1st and 2d. *Alto,*

Resolved unanimously, That the thanks of this Society be given to Mr Paine, for the affectionate concern he has shown in his second Work in behalf of the poor, the infant, and the aged; who, notwithstanding the opulence which blesses other parts of the community, are, by the grievous weight of taxes, rendered the miserable victims of poverty and wretchedness.

Resolved unanimously, That this Society, disdaining to be considered either of a Ministerial or Opposition party (amongst which we are glad, having been so often deceived by both) do ardently recommend it to all their Fellow Citizens, into

whole

whole hands these relations may come, to confer seriously and calmly with each other on the subjects alluded to, and to transmit to the world, that the spirit of true Liberty is a spirit of order; and that to obtain Justice, it is consistent that we bestir ourselves.

Resolved unanimously, That these resolutions be printed, and that a copy thereof be transmitted to the Society for Constitutional Information in London; requesting their approbation for Twelve of our Friends to be entered into their Society, for the purpose of establishing a connection and a regular communication with that, and all other similar societies in the Kingdom.

By order of the Committee.

(Signed) _____

Chairman.

Offered, That the Secretary do return the thanks of this Society, to the Society for Constitutional Information, established at Sheffield; and that he express to them with what friendship and affection this Society embraces them as brethren, and fellow labourers in the same cause. That he do assure them of our entire concurrence with their opinion, viz. That the people of this country are not, as Mr Burke terms them, *Swiss*; but rational Beings, better qualified to separate truth from error than himself, possessing more honesty, and less craft.

Resolved, That this Society will, on Friday next, March 31st, ballot for the Twelve associated members, recommended by the Sheffield Committee, and approved at this meeting.

(Signed) _____

Chairman.

At a Meeting, 30th March 1792.

The twelve gentlemen recommended by the Sheffield Society, were unanimously elected.

Read a Letter, with inclosed Resolutions, from the Secretary to the Corresponding Society, London.

" London Corresponding Society:

" Resolved, That every individual has a right to share in the government of that Society of which he is a member, unless incapacitated.

" Resolved, That nothing but non-age, a privation of reason, or an offence against the general rules of society can incapacitate him.

" Resolved, That it is as much the right as the duty of every citizen to keep a watchful eye on the Government of his country, that the laws, by being multiplied, do not degenerate into oppression, and that those who are intrusted with the government do not subvert private interest for public advantage.

" Resolved, That the people of Great Britain are not properly represented in Parliament.

" Resolved, That in consequence of a partial, unequal, and inadequate representation, together with the corrupt method in which Representatives are elected, oppressive taxes, unjust laws, restrictions of liberty, and wasting of the public money have ensued.

" Resolved, That the only remedy to these evils is a fair and impartial representation of the people in Parliament.

" Resolved, That a fair and impartial representation can never take place until partial privileges are abolished, and the strong temptations held out to electors afford a perspicuous proof that the Representatives of this country seldom procure a seat in Parliament from the unbought suffrages of a free people.

" Resolved, That this Society do express their abhorrence of tumult and violence; and that, in they aim at Reform, not anarchy, reason, eloquence, and unanimity be the only arms they employ, or persuade their fellow citizens to exert against abuse of power.

" Ordered, That the Secretary of this Society do communicate the foregoing to the Societies for Constitutional Information established in London, Manchester, and Sheffield.

" By order of the Committee.

(Signed) _____

Secretary."

" Resolved, That the Secretary of this Society do express
 " to the Corresponding Society, the extreme satisfaction which
 " we have received by the above communication, and to all
 " love them of our desire to continue to correspond and co-
 " operate with them for the purpose of obtaining a full Re-
 " presentation of the people in Parliament."

At a Meeting, 2^d April, 1793.

A Declaration from a Society in Southwark was read; and,

Resolved, That the thanks of the Society be given to the
 Southwark Society, for the following communication, and that
 it be published in the papers.

At a Meeting at the Three Tuns Tavern, Southwark,
 April 19th, 1793.

Resolved, That we do now form ourselves into a Society
 for the Diffusion of political knowledge.

Resolved, That the Society be denominated The Friends of
 the People.

Resolved, That the following be the declaration of this So-
 ciety:

Extract from Declaration.

Considering that ignorance, forgetfulness, or contempt of the
 rights of men, are the sole causes of public grievances, and the
 corruption of Government, this Society, formed for the pur-
 pose of investigating and asserting these rights, and of raising
 our efforts with others of our fellow citizens, for correcting
 national abuses, and restraining unnecessary and exorbitant
 taxation, do hereby declare—

1st, That the great end of civil Society is general happiness.

2^{dly}, That no form of government is good any farther than
 it secures that object.

3^{dly}, That all civil and political authority is derived from
 the People.

4^{thly}, That equal active citizenship is the unalienable right
 of all men; minors, criminals, and insane persons excepted.

5^{thly}, That the exercise of that right, in appointing an ade-
 quate representative Government, is the wisest device of hu-
 man policy, and the only security of national freedom.

Further Extract from same Paper.

We call upon our fellow citizens of all descriptions to institute similar Societies for the same great purpose; and we recommend a general correspondence with each other, and with the Society for Constitutional Information at London, as the best means of consulting the common weal, and of directing with greater energy our united efforts to the same common objects.

By order of the Committee.

(Signed) _____

At a Meeting, 17th April, 1793.

Resolved, That every Society desiring no union or correspondence with this, and which doth not profess any principles destructive to truth or justice, or subversive to the liberties of our country; but which, on the contrary, seeks, as we do, the removal of corruption from the Legislature, and abuses from the Government, ought to be and we hope will be, embraced with the most brotherly affection and patriotic friendship by this Society.

Read the following letter, addressed to the Society called the Friends of the People, associated for Constitutional Reform, assembled at Free Masons' Tavern.

Sir,

By the Society for Constitutional Information, I am commanded to express to you the satisfaction that its members feel on the institution of your society.

That the House of Commons itself, which is the very subject to be reformed, should have furnished a part of this strength, may ultimately afford important advantages to the public. But it must not, Sir, be disguised, that at first this circumstance will necessarily be accompanied with doubts, with suspicions, with apprehensions. It is not, Sir, the first time that members of that House have professed themselves Reformers: It is not the first time that they have entered into popular associations. But should they, on this occasion, prove faithfully instrumental in effecting a substantial Reform in the Representation of the People, and the Duration of Parliaments, it will be the first time that the nation hath not found itself in

an error, when it placed confidence in associated members of Parliament, for the recovery of the Constitutional and inalienable rights of the people. The long-lost rights of representation, are rights, Sir, which in truth are not to be recovered but by the exertions and the unanimity of the people themselves. Impressed with this great truth, it has been an invariable object of this Society "to revive in the minds of the commonalty at large a knowledge of their lost rights, respecting the election and duration of the representative body"—and we doubt not that your Society will for the wisdom of pursuing a like course. May it taste the delight of diffusing this knowledge; may it reap the benefit of selling forth the energies of the nation!

When this Society, Sir, contemplates that flood of light and truth, which, under a benign Providence, is now sweeping from the earth despotism in all its forms, and infringement of rights in all its degrees, to make way for freedom, justice, peace, and human happiness; and when it sees your Society announce itself to the world as the Friends of the People; it feels assured that this new indication abundantly partakes of that light, that it embraces that truth, and it will sit up to the sacredness of that friendship which it professes, by nobly calling from it, with disdain, all aristocratic reserves, and fairly and honestly contending for the People's rights in their full extent.

Here, Sir, be assured, lies all your strength. You may boast of names, of wealth, of talents, and even of principles; but without the fellowship of the people, understanding and feeling their immediate interest in the contest, your assertions, whenever it grapples with that powerful despotism to which it is opposed, and to which a constitutional claim gives double strength, will most assuredly crumble to dust.

Here, Sir, it is with peculiar satisfaction that our Society for Constitutional Information can express its hearty assent to its own unequivocal "Declaration of Rights, &c." which states "no Englishman can be a free man, nor the English nation a free people," it owes that confidence, on the part of all our friends to a substantial Reform of Parliament; which, in all periods

periods of the Society's existence it has invariably experienced.

This short declaration, containing no more than ^{four or five} ~~four~~ distinct propositions, satisfied the people that the Society assumed not the office of Reformer, without knowing with precision what wanted Reform; nor the character of Friend, without manifesting that sincerity which gave proof of its attachment. It left to such Reformers as Mr Burke to talk of the people's liberties, and at the same time to deny or explain away their rights.

This Society, Sir, trusts, that the purity of principle which actuated individual Members of Parliament, who joined the associations that have been spoken of, will in no degree be affected by the observations that have been made upon the inefficiency of those associations. But, convinced that a strong impression still remains upon the minds of the people, that, in general, persons who have long been accustomed to hold forth in the house of Commons, under the perfect shades in the Representation, and whose passions are all Aristocratic, must be almost more than men, at once and completely to sacrifice both prejudice and unwaranted power at the altar of Freedom;—this Society, convinced, I say: is, of the existence of this impression, would not suffer its delicacy to stand in the way of its duty on this important occasion; but determined, with the frankness belonging to sincere affection, to warn its new brethren against a danger to which they might otherwise become exposed through mere inadvertency.

That the distinguished persons who have adorned the Senate, and now adorn your Society, may be found equal to the sublime efforts of virtue which their situation now demands, and may on that account receive the blessings of their country and of mankind to the latest posterity, is the sincere, the ardent wish of the Society for Constitutional Information! In whose name I have the honour to subscribe myself, with great regard, &c.

Resolved, That the said letter be signed by the Chairman of this Meeting, and sent to the said Society at their next general Meeting.

At a Meeting, 4th May 1791.

Read letter from the Revolution Society at Norwich, as follows:

Copy of a Letter from the Chairman of the Norwich Revolutionary Society, to the Society for Constitutional Information.

To the London Society for Constitutional Information.

The Norwich Revolution Society wishes to open a communication with you at this time, when corruption has acquired a publicity in the Senate, which results from the honour of the British nation renewed, exercises for Parliamentary Reform. Without pre-judging the probable event of such an application to the Legislature, this Society is willing to circulate the information, and to co-operate in the measures that may here be adopted to further its desirable and so important an end. It is willing to hope the address of every existing grievance at the hands of a Government resulting from an extraordinary convocation, in 1688, of all who had at any preceding time been elected Representatives of the People, assisted by the hereditary councillors of the nation, and a popular deputation from the metropolis, which National CONSTITUTING Assembly exhibited for misconduct a king of the house of Stuart.

The opinions and principles of this Society are best explained by an appeal to their literary representatives. To James Mackintosh, author of the *Vindicia Gallica*, this Society offers the tribute of its approbation and gratitude, for the knowledge, the eloquence, and philosophical spirit with which he has explained, defended, and commended the Revolution of France. It believes to affirm to this only of his opinions, that, "there are but two interests in society, those of the rich and those of the poor." If so, what chance have the latter? Surely the interests of all the industrious, from the richest merchant to the poorest mechanic, are in every community the same—to lessen the numbers of the unproductive, to whose maintenance they contribute, and to do away such institutions and impôts as stridge the means of maintenance, by substituting

ing the demand for labour, or by fixing its reward; as the means most conducive to this comprehensive end, the Norwich Revolution Society desires an equitable Representation of the People.

The Rights of Man, by Thomas Paine, and the *Advice to the Privileged Orders*, by Joel Barlow, have also been read with attention, and circulated with avidity. They point out with clearness most of the abuses which have accumulated under the *British Government*; they attack with energy *many of the prejudices which have tended to perpetuate them*.

Internally, our Society is thus organized:—Any person proposed and seconded by a member is received, on paying an admission fee, and obliging himself to an annual contribution toward the purchase of books for the use of the Society, and for circulation among the *constituted clubs*. The members assemble twice, monthly. A *committee of correspondence* is periodically elected by ballot, to select books, and to conduct the other literary business. A *committee of travel* is periodically named by acclamation, to attend severally the meetings of the various *constituted clubs*, which are invited in like manner to depute a member to the monthly meetings of this: These clubs are now seven in number; and more are expected to announce their adherence. The Norwich Revolution Society, proposing to extend this form of combination, recommends for admission into the London Society for Constitutional Information the following 11 persons:

Norwich,
April 26th, 1792.

_____ Chairman.

At a Meeting, 11th of May 1793.

Resolved That there be a communication from this Society with the Society of the Constitution at Paris, known by the name of the Jacobins.

Read the following address from this Society to the Society of Friends of the Constitution at Paris, called the Jacobins.

A D D R E S S.

Brothers, and Fellow Citizens of the World,

The cordial and affectionate reception with which you have honoured our worthy countrymen Mr Thomas Cooper and Mr James Watt, members of the Society of Manchester, and united with our Society, has been communicated to us by the correspondence of these gentlemen.

In offering you our congratulations on the glorious Revolution which your nation has accomplished, we speak a language which only sincerity can dictate.

The formality of Courts affords no example to us. To do our thoughts justice, we give to the heart the liberty it delights in, and hail you as brethren.

It is not among the least of the revolutions which time is unfolding to an astonished world, that two nations, marked by some wretched mark is reciprocal hatred, should so suddenly break their common odious chain, and rush into unity.

The principle that can produce such an effect, is the offspring of no earthly Court; and whilst it exhibits to us the expensive iniquity of former politics, it enables us, with bold felicity, to say, We have done with them!

In contemplating the political condition of nations, we cannot conceive a more diabolical system of government, than that which has hitherto been generally practised over the world: To feed the avarice and gratify the wickedness of ambition, the fraternity of the human race has been destroyed; as if the several nations of the earth had been created by rival gods. Man has not considered man as the work of one Creator.

The political institutions under which he has lived have been counter to whatever religion he professed.

Indeed

Instead of that universal benevolence which the morality of every known religion declares, he has been politically bound to consider his species as his natural enemy, and to describe virtues and vices by a geographical chart.

The principles we now declare are not peculiar to the Society that addresses you; they are extending themselves, with accumulating force, through every part of our country, and derive strength from an union of causes, which no other principles admit.

The religious friend of man, of every denomination, records them as his own; they animate the lover of rational liberty; and they cherish the heart of the poor, now bleeding under an oppression of taxes, by a prospect of relief.

We have against us only that false enemy which is the enemy of justice in all countries—a band of courtiers, fattening on the spoil of the public.

It would have given an additional triumph to our congratulations, if the equal rights of man (which are the foundation of your declaration of rights) had been recognized by the Governments around you, and tranquilly established in all. But if despotism be still reserved, to exhibit, by conspiracy and combination, a further example of infamy to future ages, that Power that disposes of events best knows the means of making that example finally beneficial to his creatures.

We have beheld your possible principles insulted by despotic ignorance: We have seen the right hand of fellowship, which you held out to the world, rejected by those who riot on its plunder: We now behold you a nation provoked into defence; and we can see no mode of defence equal to that of establishing the general freedom of Europe.

In this host of causes we with you sympathize. Our hearts go with you; and in saying this, we believe we utter the voice of millions.

Resolved, That the above address be signed by the Chairman, and that _____ be requested to transmit it, with all possible dispatch, to _____ at Paris.

Resolved, That the said Address be read a second time at next meeting, for publication.

Resolved, That a Committee be appointed to meet the Committees of the Southwark, London, and Westminster Societies of the Friends of the People, to-morrow evening, at seven o'clock, at the White Hart Tavern in Holborn, and be empowered to co-operate with them in the publication of the four editions contained in the declaration heretofore published by this Society.

At a Meeting, 18th May 1792.

The Address to the Jacobins ordered to be published.

Read the following letter from Mr Paine, acquainting the Society that he is proceeding to bring out a cheap edition of the First and Second Parts of the Rights of Man.

Resolved, That this Society will contribute its utmost aid towards supporting the rights of the nation.

Sir,

London, May 18th, 1792.

The honourable patronage which the Society for Constitutional Information has repeatedly given to the works, intitled "Rights of Man," renders it incumbent on me to communicate to them whatever relates to the progress of those works.

A great number of letters, from various parts of the country, have come to me, expressing an earnest desire that the first and second parts of "Rights of Man" could be rendered more generally useful, by printing them in a cheaper manner than they have hitherto been: As those requests were from persons to whom the purchase at the present price was inconvenient, I took the proper means for complying with their request.

I am first informed that the Ministry intend bringing a prosecution; and as a nation (as well the poor as the rich) has a right to know what any works are that are made the subject of a prosecution, the getting out a cheap edition is, I conceive, rendered more necessary than before, as a means towards supporting that right;—and I have the pleasure of informing the Society that I am proceeding with the work.

I am, &c.

THOMAS PAINE.

To the Chairman of the Society for

Constitutional Information.

The Society took into consideration the contents of the aforesaid letter, and came to the following Resolutions :

Resolved, That the Thanks of this Society be given to Mr Thomas Paine, for the communication he has made, and for the patriotic disinterestedness manifested therein.

Resolved, That this Society will contribute its utmost aid towards supporting the rights of the nation, and the freedom of the Press, and him who has so efficiently and successfully contributed to both.

Resolved, That the right of investigating principles and systems of government is one of these rights; and that the works of any author, which cannot be refuted by reason, cannot, on the principles of good government or of common sense, be made the subject of a prosecution.

Resolved, That the excessive taxes which this country pays, being now seventeen millions annually, give an additional motive for the exercise of this right, and render it at the same time a more immediate duty the nation owes to itself, to enter upon and promote all such investigations.

Resolved, That a Committee be appointed to enquire into the rumour of the above-mentioned prosecution; and to report thereon to the Society at its next Meeting.

Resolved, That a copy of Mr Paine's letter, together with these resolutions, be transmitted to all the associated Societies in town and country; and that this Society do congratulate them on the firm and orderly spirit, and tranquil perseverance, manifested in all their proceedings, and exhort them to a steady continuance therein.

Resolved, That 5000 copies of the above letter and resolutions be printed, for the use of this Society.

At a Meeting, 15th May 1791.

Resolved, That 6000 more copies of the bills discussed at the last meeting be printed: That 100 be sent to each of the twelve associated members of the Sheffield Constitutional Societies; 100 to each of the twelve associated members of the Norwich Constitutional Society; 200 to each of the other So-

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clerics corresponding with this Society ; 100 to Derby ; and 200 to the Society at Belper.

Read a paper called a proclamation, dated the 22d instant, for suppressing seditious publications.

The Society came to several resolutions on this proclamation ; the last of which is,

That the monstrous inequality and grievance of the present National debt ;

The grievous oppression of seventeen millions annually of taxes ;

The scandalous duration of Parliaments for seven years ;

Private proprietors of Boroughs, falsely pretending to be, and really acting as, representatives of the people ;

Judges claiming in all cases, and under all circumstances, the determination of the criminality or innocence of any act, exclusively of the Jury ; expensive armaments, and menacing proclamations and counter-measures in time of a profound peace :

These things we cannot believe either wise or wholesome ; and we declare it to be a fatal omission, at the time of the Revolution, that these things were not sufficiently guarded against ; and we feel it our duty, to the utmost of our power, to obtain a full and fair representation of the people, which we hold to be the only effectual security for their rights, liberties, and property, and to be the only measure that can produce " that due submission to the laws, and that just confidence in the integrity and wisdom of Parliaments," which are declared in the said paper, called a proclamation, to be " the chief causes (under Providence) of the wealth, the happiness, and the prosperity of the kingdom."

Read a communication from the London Corresponding Society, as follows :

Sir,

By direction of the delegates of the London Corresponding Society, I have the honour of inclosing to you a copy of their

address and regulations, which I request you will communicate to the Constitutional Society.

I am truly, Sir,

Your most obedient and

Bel, Exeter Street,

very humble servant,

May 24th 1792,

Secretary.

To the Chairman of the
Constitutional Society.

Resolved, That the thanks of this Society be returned to the London Corresponding Society, for the communication which it has made to this Society; and that the further consideration of the said communication be postponed to the next meeting of this Society,

At a Meeting, 21st June 1792.

The Secretary reported that he had sent 1000 of the printed bills, ordered at the last meeting, to the Sheffield Constitutional Society;—1000 to the Norwich Constitutional Society;—to the Southwark Constitutional Society 200;—to the London Corresponding Society 200;—to a person to be forwarded to Derby 20. ;—to the Constitutional Whigs 200;—to the Society at Belgar 200.

Resolved, That the Secretary do send to Birmingham 500;—to the Society at Aldgate 200;—to Manchester 100;—to Liverpool 200;—to Cambridge 500;—and 400 to [a person] to be distributed among the Societies in the neighbourhood of Glasgow.

Read a letter from the Corresponding Society as follows:

Sir,

21st May 1792.

The London Corresponding Society return thanks to the Society for Constitutional Information, for the communication of Mr Thomas Paine's letter to them, and of their resolutions subsequent thereto.

It gives us infinite satisfaction to think that mankind will soon reap the advantage of Mr Paine's labours, in a new and cheaper edition of the Rights of Man.

We are, however, no ways surprized at the report of a

prosecution being commenced against his works ; for, by the doctrine substituted for law in England, that truth constitutes the libel, the very many truths in both volumes of the Rights of Man, render them completely libellous, and force Administration, perhaps against their inclination, to submit them to the impartial investigation of competent Judges.

His Majesty's proclamation next engages our notice ;—after reading it with great attention, we discard an idea thrown out by some, that it had been drawn up and sent forth at this juncture with a view of raising unfavorable prejudices in the minds of the people against Mr Paine, or his works, now under a prosecution ; inasmuch as such an attempt, if it could be proved, would not only bear witness on the face of it, but would likewise be a most daring violation of the laws.

We are more willing to discover therein his Majesty's great goodness of heart and paternal care, anticipating our warmest wishes, giving the greatest encouragement to our different Societies, and holding forth the same strong desire with us of aiding by the Constitution in its pure and uncorrupt state, of preserving the public peace and prosperity, of preserving to ALL, the full enjoyment of their rights and liberties, both religious and civil ; and leaving, in fact, to encourage them, under the most serious consideration of their own welfare and that of their posterity, to join us, and unite their endeavours with ours in guarding against all attempts, aiming at the subversion of wholesome and regular government, and to discourage and repress, in the utmost of their power, all proceedings tending to produce riot and tumult.

Our ends being thus incontrovertibly the same, and therefore enjoying the royal sanction, we imagine that in exercising our right of meeting, when and where we please, of circulating such subjects as we think proper, of instructing our fellow-citizens, and of uniting our endeavours to obtain a perfect Representation in Parliament, we are taking the truest method of securing to ourselves and our posterity all the blessings of liberty and peace.

Yielding to the Society for Constitutional Information, both in priority of institution, and in greatness of abilities, we yet

put in our claim for equality of soul towards the public good; and firm determination to obtain it.

We are, &c.

_____ Chairman.

_____ Secretary.

To the Chairmen of the Society for
Constitutional Information.

Ordered, That the said letter be published in such newspapers as will receive the advertisements of this Society.

Resolved, That an open Committee do take into consideration Paine's letter, and have power to transmit copies to the different Corresponding Societies.

Also Copies of the resolutions relative to the proclamation to be printed, and sent to the different Corresponding Societies.

At a Meeting, 15th June 1791.

Read letter from the London Corresponding Society, stating, that they had opened a subscription for the defence of Mr Paine, and that they wished six of their members might be associated with this Society.

Ordered, That the Secretary be desired to inform the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society, that this Society received their proposal with pleasure; and are willing to admit such six of the members whom they shall nominate, to be associated members of this Society.

Resolved, That a subscription be opened in this Society for the benefit of Mr Thomas Paine, author of the Rights of Man.

Ordered, That the letter of the London Corresponding Society, and the two last resolutions, be published in the newspapers.

Resolved, That 12,000 copies of Mr Paine's letter to Mr Secretary Dundas be printed by this Society, for the purpose of being transmitted to our correspondents throughout Great Britain; and that a committee be appointed to direct the same.

At

At a Meeting, 22d June 1792.

A member reported that an information was filed against Mr Paine, for his publication of the Rights of Man.

Ordered, That the subscription entered into for the benefit of Mr Thomas Paine, be entered in a separate part of the book, and kept open for the members of this Society.

At a Meeting, 19th June 1792.

The Committee report a plan of distribution of the 12,000 copies of Mr Paine's letter to Mr Dundas; which is adopted.

At a Meeting, 6th July 1792.

Read letter from the Secretary to the London Corresponding Society.

Sir,

In the name of the London Corresponding Society, I beg to return thanks to the Society for Constitutional Information for their present of 200 copies of their resolutions, respecting the King's proclamation; as also for the 200 copies of Mr Paine's letter, &c.—Likewise Mr Paine's letter to Mr Secretary Dundas,—by care in the distribution of them, these 600 papers shall be seen by as many thousand persons.

We had ourselves highly favoured by your readiness to admit six of our members among you. I am directed to forward to you the following six names, as the persons chosen by our Society for that honourable purpose; our sense of the favour so conferred will be best expressed by their close attendance at your instructive meetings, and constant endeavours to fix and the so beneficial and so much wanted Reform of Parliamentary Representation.

I am, Sir,

with great Respect,

July 6. 1792.

Your very humble servant,

Secretary.

A Deputation from the Friends of the People in Southwark, on the subject of the dinner of 14th July, attended.

On a motion to dine with them, the previous question put, and carried.

At a Meeting, 19th July 1791.

The six gentlemen recommended by the London Corresponding Society, unanimously elected.

The Society to dine at the Shakespeare the 4th of July.

At a Meeting, 1st September 1904.

Read a letter from the London Corresponding Society, to the Secretary.

The London Corresponding Society having taken the resolution of transmitting to the French National Convention an address, (signed by all the members, or by the different delegates, each stating for how many members he signs) to assure that suffering nation that we sympathize with them in their misfortunes—that we view their exertions with admiration—that we wish to give them all such countenance and support as individuals, unsupported and oppressed themselves, can afford—and that should those in power here dare (in violation of the nation's pledged faith of Neutrality, and in opposition to the well-known sentiments of the people at large) to join the German band of despots united against liberty, we disclaim all concurrence therein, and will, to a man, exert every justifiable means for counteracting their machinations against the freedom and the happiness of mankind.

I am ordered by the Committee to acquaint the Society for Constitutional Information therewith, in order to be favoured with their opinion thereon; and in hopes that if they approve the idea, and recommend its adoption to the different Societies, the publication of such a respectable number of real names will greatly check the hostile measures which might otherwise be put in execution.

I was, with great help.

Dear Sir,

London, 21st Sept. 1792. Your very humble Servant,
— — — Secretary.

Resolved, That the Secretary express the thanks of this Society to the London Corresponding Society, for their commu-

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situation; and acquaint them that this Society do very highly approve of their situation.

Resolved, That the said letter be read at the next meeting, for the purpose of considering of publishing the same.

At a Meeting, 3th of October 1791.

Resolved, That the letter from the Corresponding Society, entered on the minutes of the last meeting, together with the resolution of the Society thereon, be published in the newspapers.

Read a letter from the Constitutional Whigs independent, and Friends of the People, accompanied with fifty copies of a letter transmitted to them from the Friends of Freedom at Cherbourg.

Ordered, That the Secretary return the thanks of this Society to the Constitutional Whigs, for the communication.

At a Meeting, 11th October 1791.

Read Mr Barlow's letter to the National Convention of France, on the defects of the Constitution of 1791, and the extent of the amendments which ought to be applied.

Resolved, That ————— be requested to draw up an answer to the letter of Mr Barlow, read at the last meeting, expressing how much pride this Society feel at having elected him an honorary member.

Ordered, That the Secretary be directed to transmit a copy of the *Argus* of to-morrow to each of the members of this Society.

Read a letter from the London Corresponding Society, with an inclosed Address to the National Convention of France.

Sir,

Your favour of the 3d instant, informing us that our proposal for addressing the French National Convention had met with the approbation of the Society for Constitutional Information; we have inclosed you a copy of the Address we have

drawn up, and mean to send; the Society at large having approved of it.

Not in the least presuming to propose it for the adoption of your Society, ourselves will joyfully throw it aside, and as readily subscribe to any production of yours, better calculated to answer the purpose, and less unworthy being presented to so august an Assembly.

Should no other be produced, we imagine this plain, but honest Address, will be adopted by some other Societies. In concurrence with our own; and, respecting the manner of signing, of conveying, and of presenting it, your better experienced advice will greatly oblige, Gentlemen,

Your very humble servant, for the Committee of the London Corresponding Society,

MAURICE MARGABOT, Chairman.

————— Sec.

Thursday, 11. Oct. 1792.

Frenchmen,

While foreign robbers are ravaging your territories under the specious pretext of justice, cruelty and debauchery leading on their van, perfidy with treachery bringing up the rear, yet mercy and friendship impudently held forth to the world as the sole motives of their incursions, the oppressed part of mankind, forgetting for a while their own sufferings, feel only for yours, and with an anxious eye watch the event, fervently supplicating the Almighty Ruler of the universe to be favourable to your cause, so intimately blended with their own. Enslaved upon by an oppressive system of extortion, whole gradual, but continued encroachments have deprived this nation of nearly all its boasted liberty, and brought us almost to that abject state of slavery from which you have so emerged. Five thousand British citizens, indignant, manfully step forth to release their country from the opprobrium brought upon it by the supine conduct of those in power; they conceive it to be the duty of Britons to counterpoise and assist, to the utmost of their power, the champions of human happiness, and to swear

to a nation proceeding on the plan you have adopted, an inviolable friendship; sacred from this day be that friendship between us, and may fragrance to the uttermost overtake the man who, hereafter, shall attempt to break a rupture.

Though we appear so few at present, be assured, Frenchmen, that our number increases daily. It is true, that the stern upbited arm of authority at present keeps back the mild; that busily circulated impostures hourly mislead the credulous; and that court intimacy with gilded French traitors has some effect on the unwary and on the ambitious; but with certainty we can inform you, Friends and Freemen, that information makes a rapid progress among us; society has taken possession of the public mind; the conjoint reign of ignorance and despotism passes away; men now ask each other what is freedom, what are our rights? Frenchmen, you are already free, and Britons are preparing to become so. Casting far from us the criminal prejudices artfully instilled by evil minded men and wily courtiers, we, instead of natural enemies, at length discover in Frenchmen our fellow citizens of the world, and our brethren by the same heavenly Father, who created us for the purpose of loving, and mutually assisting each other, but not to hate, and to be ever ready to cut each others throats at the command of weak and ambitious kings and corrupt ministers:—Seeking our real enemies, we find them in our bosoms, we feel ourselves inwardly torn by, and ever the victims of a restless and all consuming scisselweary, hitherto the bane of every nation under the sun. Wilkly have you acted in expelling it from France.

Warm as our wishes are for your success, eager as we are to behold Freedom triumphant, and man every where restored to the enjoyment of his just rights, a sense of our duty as orderly citizens, forbids our flying in arms to your assistance; our Government has pledged the national faith to remain neutral—in a struggle of liberty against despotism, Britons remain neutral? O shame! But we have entrusted our King with discretionary power, we therefore must obey,—our hands are bound, but our hearts are free, and they are with you.

Let German despots act as they please, we shall rejoice at their fall, compassing however their enslaved subjects. We hope this tyranny of their masters will prove the means of re-issuing, in the full enjoyment of their rights and liberties, millions of our fellow creatures.

With unceasing, therefore, we view the Elector of Hanover join his troops to traitors and robbers—but the King of Great Britain will do well to remember that this country is not Hanover—should he forget this distinction, we will not.

While you enjoy the envied glory of being the united defenders of freedom, we fondly anticipate in idea, the numerous blessings mankind will enjoy. If you succeed, as we ardently wish, the triple alliance (not of crowns, but) of the people of America, France, and Britain, will give freedom to Europe, and peace to the whole world. Dear Friends, you combat for the advantage of the human race—How well purchased will it be, though at the expense of much blood, the glorious unprecedented privilege of saying, mankind is free—tyrants and tyranny are no more—peace reigns on the earth, and this is the work of Frenchmen.

Resolved, That the thanks of this Society be given to the London Corresponding Society for the above Address, transmitted by them; and that the Secretary acquaint them this Society do highly approve of the spirit of the same.

At a meeting, 19th October 1792, an answer to Joel Barlow's prepared by ———— was produced, read, approved; and, with this letter, ordered to be published.

A Committee appointed to confer with the delegates of the London Corresponding Society, on an Address to the National Convention of France.

At a Meeting, 16th October 1792, the Secretary read the Report of the Committee appointed at the last Meeting.

Resolved, *st*, That it is the opinion of this Committee, the purpose of the address drawn up by the London Corresponding Society will be much better answered by separate addresses from the different Societies, than by one joint address.

2d, That

34, That the Committee, for that reason, do not recommend a conference with the London Corresponding Society in the presentation of a joint address.

35, That the Committee, warmly approving the principles and spirit of the address from the London Corresponding Society, recommend the Society to follow so laudable an example.

36, That it is the opinion of this Committee, that the thanks of the Society are due to the gentlemen delegates from the London Corresponding Society for their punctual attendance, and for the able and candid manner in which they assisted in discussing the subject of the conference.

Read a Letter, with its enclosure, from the editor of the *Patriot*, at Sheffield.

The Letter itself expresses of the Constitutional Society its not answering a former letter, and encloses a letter from the Editor to a Society at Stockport, which Society the writer recommends to the attention and protection of the Constitutional Society.—The following are extracts from the enclosure.

It only remains then for us, seeing the great and insurmountable difficulties we have to encounter, to call about for the most likely and proper means and weapons by which to defend ourselves, and to forward and support such measures as it may be necessary to pursue; and on this head, my good Sir, permit me to impress it on the minds of your Society, that reason, impartial reason, must ever be our generalissimo or commander in chief; when I say this, I beg leave to add, that we must be fettered in command. By the word "art" I do not mean low craft or cunning, but that mode of application of our reason and arguments on different men and on different occasions, which only a considerable degree of study, and practical knowledge also of men and manners, can ever furnish us with, so as to make us proficient.

Allow me then to observe to you, Sir, that I perfectly coincide with you in opinion with regard to the different Societies appointing delegates to go into the different villages and country places, for the purpose of informing their minds, and rousing them from the lethargy in which they seem plunged

—I have already communicated the same idea to the London Constitutional and Corresponding Societies, and to those of Norwich and Manchester, and I hope it will soon be universally adopted by every one. But the grand object to be attended to on this head, is the choice of men to be appointed; a neglect of this kind had like to have had very awkward consequences in this neighbourhood, and if not immediately checked would have injured the cause of Freedom very greatly; infinite care and circumspection will therefore be necessary on this head.

As I am on the subject, permit me to suggest to those members of your Society, who may undertake this arduous but honourable and praiseworthy task, that they cannot be too cautious in their mode of proceeding—The minds of men, for the wildest and best purposes, are formed by the Great Creator in various and unlike each other as their faces, and their passions reign over each with the same uncertain and variegated sway, and in the same manner that Sir Robert Walpole (one of the elders and fathers of corruption) very justly observed, that every man has his price in the way of being bought, so we may fairly apply the same maxim to mankind in general in the article of persuasion, and the dexterous method of bringing them from wrong opinions they may have formed, or prejudices they may have imbibed, by an attentive observation of their intellectual faculties, and that leading passion of the soul which governs the main spring of their most material actions.

For example, the generality of farmers in this county and Lancashire, are as ignorant as the brutes they ride to market, and so absorbed in the sordid idea of getting, that provided they can keep up the prices of grain, cattle, &c. so as to answer their Landlords, and pay their taxes, however enormous, they are too sluggish and indolent to think about reforms, or any thing of the kind; yet there is one string about their hearts, which, being skillfully touched, will make them dance to any tune, and move to any measure. This is the subject of *tythes*; and why does it touch them? why, Sir, because it is within the scope of their limited capacity—ignorant as they are in other matters, they see and pungently feel

the weight of this baneful and unjust devourer of all their improvements in agriculture and husbandry; and, I believe, did every tax operate in the same visible degree which this imposition does, I fear there would be an end to the idea of taxation being submitted to at all. Indeed, as taxes are laid on at present by those who do not represent us, the taxation is rather more not less than robbery, a subtraction to it every.

But to return to my subject: *In the same manner that a farmer may be robbed by the invasion of tythes, the brewer by the excessive duty on beer, the shoemaker by the enormous and unnecessary shoemaking army, and ALL by a temperate and dispassionate relation of the immense number of pleasure and giddy officers, in which the corrupt and profligate favourites, agents, and dependants of the rich and great, riot in the spoils and plunder wrested from the sweat of the brow, and continual labour of body, of the husbandman, the mechanic, the labourer, and the artificer.* It is by no means a difficult matter to rouse general indignation at the idea of so small a comparative number of idle, and profligate dress sucking and squandering away the honey produced by such immense numbers of hard toiling and industrious bees. If you (for I am certain you will be one of the most active of these delegates) meet with men who have violent prejudices in favour of any *abuse* or *party*, never attack those passions directly, for that will only inflame and confirm them the more; pass them over for the present, and engage their attention towards something else, in which they will listen with a less degree of apprehension of being attacked in a favourite point; once gain their good opinion, and open their eyes to one evil, they will be more ready to hear you on others, till at last the favoured object by which their eyes were jaundiced will appear in its true colours, and fall before your arguments like all the rest.

There is one thing above all others which requires to be particularly attended to, and that is, to endeavour to produce the mass of people with respect to those falsehoods which have been industriously propagated by the enemies to a Reform, in order to blind, delude, and terrify all ranks of people who are any way independent, or possessed of property.

One of these falsehoods is, "that the advocates of Reform wish to introduce a levelling scheme, or an equal partition of property." This alarms the farmers, and indeed all classes of men, who, by their industry, or other adventitious circumstances, are possessed of the goods of this world. So many of the ministerial prints do have propagated this doctrine, aided and assisted by the private representations, or rather misrepresentations, of the clergy, and other tools of government, and of privileged orders, have had a very wonderful and baneful effect on the multitude, and have stamped a dread of Reform on the minds of many that I know, whose situations in life would induce one reasonably to suppose it impossible to completely to impose upon them; however, it always has been the case, that falsehoods boldly uttered may prevail for a time, but must be overwhelmed in the end, by the bright and sacred energies of truth.

To explain this matter, and many others, properly, will require great coolness, moderation and patience. I have found the following method answer best: "Do you know such a gentleman?" naming some one of large property and good character in the neighbourhood, who is known to be a friend to a Reform. "Yes."—"Well, and do you suppose that he would promote a scheme that would excite and oblige him to part with that property he possesses, in order for it to be divided amongst strangers whom he never saw or heard of?" "No."—"Why then should you suffer yourself to be imposed upon by such an idle tale, fabricated and circulated for the purpose of raising a dread in you against those more enlightened of your fellow citizens who wish for a Reform, as you would did you see its necessity; a dread which may cause you to fast your eyes upon oppressive evils and unjust laws, exorbitant taxes, an unnecessary *standing army*, kept on foot at the expense of two millions and a half, for the purposes of influence and corruption; a pension list, which is a disgrace to the Government, and a stigma and reproach on the spirit and prudence of the nation; sinecure places, for the mere possessing of which hundreds of individuals receive thousands a-year, each for doing nothing at all, either for the public service or their own; in short, such an accu-

" mass accumulation of taxes, and so prodigal an expenditure
 " of their produce, as no nation on the earth ever heard of or
 " submitted to before. To make you shut your eyes, and
 " continue blind to these enormities, these idle and false
 " tales are villainously dispersed abroad; but believe them
 " not, consult your own reason, and it will show you, that
 " there is a palpable lie on the face of every one of them!"
 Then explain the nature, aim, and end of your Society, invite
 them to attend it, and to judge for themselves. If they do so,
 they will soon aid and assist you, by adopting similar ones in
 their several neighbourhoods, till in time they will overspread
 the whole surface of this sea-girt isle.

At present, Sir, I would not trouble you further on the sub-
 ject, which I now quit to return to the conduct and regulation
 of your own Society, and all others which may arise hereafter;
 and as to them, I think the taskmasters in Stockport, Manches-
 ter, &c. have given you a hint and lesson for which you ought
 to esteem yourselves far ever obliged to them. I own their
 insolence and audacity in proceeding as they have done is be-
 yond example, but only deserving of contempt—as such, leave
 them to themselves. Public houses were never worthy of re-
 ceiving such guests, whose sacred and important duty require
 and demand to be performed in mansions more dignified and
 respectable. Your meetings should be at the houses of one
 another, in honourable rotation: and, to prevent inconvenience
 even from too great a number, not more than ten or twelve
 at the most should compose a primary or district meeting.
 More members may be admitted in each district, till they
 reach twenty or twenty-four, according to the number fixed
 on—but then immediately should divide into two district
 meetings.—The several districts should send each one mem-
 ber, by election, to a meeting of delegates, and this meeting
 of delegates should elect, out of their own body, a certain num-
 ber, which is to compose a select committee. This select com-
 mittee to manage the correspondence, and every other impor-
 tant concern, for the whole of the districts in any town or
 parish, subject always to the revision and approbation of the
 districts. The delegates and select committee to be chosen
 only for a limited time; before the expiration of which others

to be elected as before from the districts, to supply their places, by which rotations every member would in time become qualified to be a delegate and a select committee man, tho' he might not be so on his first entrance as a district member. These are only hints, on which you may improve or enlarge as much as you please.

Ordered, That the said letter be taken into consideration the next business at the next meeting.

Resolved, That at the next meeting of this Society they do consider of an answer to the Corresponding Society, on the subject of their letter, accompanying their Address to the National Convention.

Resolved, That at the said meeting the Society do attend to the example of the London Corresponding Society, and consider of an Address to the National Convention of France.

At a Meeting, 9th November 1792.

The Committee appointed at the last meeting to prepare an Address from this Society to the National Convention of France made their report, and produced the following Address, which was read and approved.

The Society for Constitutional Information in London
to the National Convention in France.

Servants of a sovereign people, and Benefactors of Mankind,

We rejoice that your Revolution has arrived at that point of perfection which will permit us to address you by this title; it is the only one that can accord with the character of true legislators. Every successive epoch in your affairs has added something to the triumph of liberty; and the glorious victory of the 26th of August has finally prepared the way for a Constitution, which we trust you will establish on the basis of reason and nature.

Considering the mass of delusion accumulated on mankind to obscure their understandings, you cannot be astonished at the opposition you have met both from tyrants and from slaves. The instrument used against you by each of these classes is the same; for in the genealogy of human misery, ignorance is as sure the parent of oppression and the child of submission.

Printed at the press, formerly of H. K. the Year [1792] by William L. the Lat. and the Clerk. in 1792. The

The events of every day are proving that your cause is cherished by the people in all your continental vicinity ; that a majority of each of these nations are your real friends, whose governments have tutored them into apparent foes, and that they only wait to be delivered by your arms from the decided necessity of fighting against them.

The condition of Englishmen is less to be deplored—here the hand of oppression has not yet ventured completely to ravish the pen from us, nor openly to point the sword at you. From belated burning with ardor in your cause, we tender you our warmest wishes for the full extent of its progress and success. It is indeed a sacred cause, we cherish it as the pledge of your happiness, our *moral and eternal friends*, and we rely upon it as the bond of paternal union to the human race, in which union our own nation will surely be one of the first to consent.

Our Government has still the power, and perhaps the inclination, to employ hirelings to contradict us ; but it is our real opinion, that we now speak the sentiments of a great majority of the English nation. The people here are wearied with imposture, and worn out with war. They have learned to reflect, that both the one and the other are the offspring of unnatural combinations in Society, as relative to systems of government, not the result of the natural temper of nations as relative to each other's position.

Go on, Legislators, in the work of human happiness. The headship will in part be ours, but the glory shall be all your own—it is the reward of your performance ; it is the prize of virtue. The sparks of liberty, preserved in England for ages, like the coruscations of the northern Aurora, served but to show the darkness visible in the rest of Europe. The light of the American Republic, like an effulgent morning, arose with increasing vigour, but still too distant to enlighten our hemisphere, till the splendor of the French Revolution burst forth upon the nations, in the full fervour of a meridian sun, and displayed, in midst of the European world, the practical result of principles, which philosophy had sought in the shade of speculation, and which experience met every where confirm. It dispels the clouds of prejudice from all people, re-

with the secrets of all despots, and creates a new character for him.

In this career of improvement, your example will be soon followed; for notions, rising from their lethargy, will reclaim the Rights of Man with a voice which man cannot resist.

Signed, by order of the Society,

_____ Chairman

Secretary:

Resolved, That the thanks of this Society be given to the Committee who prepared the above address.

Resolved, That Mr Beale and Mr Frost be deputed by this Society, to present the Address of this Society at the bar of the National Convention of France.

Resolved, That the thanks of this Society be given to Mr Barlow and Mr Frost, for accepting the above dedication.

At a Meeting, 9th November 1930.

Read a letter from Mr. _____ of Leicester.

Ordered, That the Secretary do write to Mr
and acquaint him, that if he will transmit to him the declara-
tion proposed to be drawn up by the Leicester Society, the
Secretary will lay the same before a Committee of this So-
ciety, who will revise the same.

Ordered, That the declaration which shall be sent from the Lelouch Society be referred to the Committee of Correspondence.

At a Meeting, 14th December 1902.

Read a printed Address from Macmillan.

Resolved, That the said Address be approved for publishing in the news-sheets.

A motion was made, and seconded, that the next law of this Society be suspended on this occasion; which motion was carried in the affirmative.

Resolved, That the said Address be printed in the newspapers.

Refused, That one hundred thousand copies of the same be printed

printed by this Society, and distributed to their correspondents in Great Britain and Ireland.

The following resolutions were proposed by a member of the Society :

Resolved, 1st, That the object of this Society, from its first institution to the present moment of alarm, has uniformly been to promote the welfare of the people by all constitutional means, and to expose, in their true light, the abuses which have imperceptibly crept in, and at last grown to such a height as to raise the most serious apprehensions in every true friend of the Constitution.

Resolved, 2d, That this Society disclaims the idea of wishing to effect a change in the present system of things by violence and public commotion; but that it trusts to the good sense of the people, when they shall be fully enlightened on this subject, to procure, without disturbing the public tranquillity, an efficient and permanent Reform.

Resolved, 3d, That the intentions of this and of similar Societies have of late been grossly calumniated, by those who are interested to perpetuate abuses, and their agents, who have been industrious to represent members of such Societies as men of dangerous principles, wishing to destroy all social order, disturb the state of property, and introduce anarchy and confusion instead of regular government.

Resolved, 4th, That in order to counteract the operation of such gross aspersions, and to prevent them from checking the progress of liberal enquiry, it is, at this time, peculiarly expedient, that this and similar Societies should publicly assert the rectitude of their principles.

Resolved, That the said resolutions be adopted, in order for printing in the news-papers.

Read a letter from the Society of Friends of Liberty and Equality, sitting at Laon, capital of the Department De L'Aisne, to the Patriotic Society of London, named the Society for Constitutional Information.

Resolved, That the said letter be referred to the Committee of Correspondence.

At a Meeting, 21st December 1791.

The Secretary reported, that he had offered the Address which was sent to the last meeting from Manchester, and ordered to be published, to the offices of the Morning Chronicle and Morning Post, and that they had refused to print them; but the Morning Post had given a written answer to his application, which being read;

Ordered, That the same be entered in the books of this Society.

" This excellent paper, drawn by a masterly hand, we wish
" to see in the possession of every Englishman; but after the
" verdict against Mr Paley, which was not warranted by the
" law or Conscience, the proprietors of news-papers tremble
" at inserting any thing except sallow panygerics, on a de-
" graded Legislature and hungry Court Ministers—the vile
" Associations have worked the public mind into such a fer-
" vent, that a jury would, by the intimation of a judge, find
" any thing a libel—we therefore can only express our for-
" row, that self-preservation will not permit us to make the
" Morning Post the vehicle to convey this paper to the
" public.

Read a letter from Mr ———, of Manchester.

Resolved, That the Address from Manchester, together with the resolution, be published in news-papers in Scot-land.

Read a letter from the Society of the Friends to Liberty and Equality, at Mazon, in the Department of Saone and Loire.

Ordered, That the same be entered on the minutes of the Society.

[A blank is left in the book where it should be entered.]

Resolved, That ————— be a Committee for Foreign Correspondence.

Resolved, That the letter from the said Society be referred to the Committee for Foreign Correspondence.

Ordered,

Ordered, That the proceedings of the Committee for Foreign Correspondence be entered in a separate book.

At a Meeting, 18th January 1793.

Resolved, That citizen St André, a member of the National Convention of France, being considered by us as one of the most judicious and enlightened friends of human liberty, be admitted an associated honorary member of this Society.

Resolved, That the said resolution be published in the news-papers.

At a Meeting, 19th January 1793.

Resolved, That citizen Barrère, a member of the National Convention of France, being considered by us as one of the most judicious and enlightened friends of human liberty, be admitted an associated honorary member of this Society.

Resolved, That citizen Roland, being also considered by us as one of the most judicious and enlightened friends of human liberty, be admitted an associated honorary member of this Society.

Resolved, That the said resolutions be published in the news-papers.

Resolved, That it appears to this Society, from the best information we can obtain, that the people of Great Britain are, at this present time, utterly averse to a war with France, and consider such an event as a calamity of the human race, however it may gratify a confederacy of foreign Kings.

Resolved, That the said resolution be published in the news-papers.

At a Meeting, 1st February 1793.

Read a circular letter from the Sheffield Society for Constitutional Information.

Resolved, That a Committee be appointed to report an answer.

Resolved, That the speeches of citizen St André and citizen Barrère (associated honorary members of this Society) as given in the Gazette National ou Monsieur l'universelle of Paris,

on the 4th, 6th, and 7th of January 1793, be inserted in the books of this Society.

Resolved, That the said resolution be published in the news-papers.

At a Meeting, 13th February 1793.

Read a letter from the Society for Constitutional Information at Birmingham, of which the following is an extract :

Our Society requests the favour of your admitting the following twelve persons, whose names are subscribed, to be enrolled members of your Society, for the purpose of corresponding with yours and every other similar institution in the nation, for the better regulating our measures, and receiving instruction.

Wishing you all the success your laudable undertaking deserves, we are, with sincerity,

Your fellow citizens and friends.

Resolved, That the twelve members of the Birmingham Society for Constitutional Information, recommended in the said letter, be admitted associated members of this Society.

Resolved, That the said letter, and the election of the said twelve members, be published in the news-papers (exclusive of their names).

At a Meeting, 13th March 1793.

Read a letter from the Constitutional Society at Sheffield, including the resolutions of the 13th of February last.

Resolved, That the Secretary be instructed to return the thanks of this Society to the Society for Constitutional Information at Sheffield, for their commendation; and to acquaint them, that this Society perfectly agree with them in their sentiments, with respect to the calamities of war in general, and that they concur with them in thinking that the thanks of the community at large are due to all those who have exerted themselves to prevent the present war.

Resolved, That the thanks of this Society be given to Joel

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[G]

Barlow

Barlow and John Frost, for their conduct in the performance of the Address of this Society to the National Convention of France; and that Mr Frost be assured that our regard for him is not lessened, but increased, by the prosecutions and persecutions which his faithful and due discharge of that commission may bring upon him.

At a Meeting, 5th April 1793.

Resolved, That a letter be written to Simon Barlow and O. Liver Bood, Esquires, expressive of the high sense we entertain of their exertions in the cause of Freedom; and to assure them, that we consider the imprisonment they at present suffer on that account as illegal and unconstitutional.

The following letter was produced and read:

Gentlemen,

It is not easy for men, who feel strongly and sincerely, to convey these feelings by letter, we therefore rely on your conceiving for us much of that which we are unable to express to you. We think, however, that we shall be guilty of a great omission, did we neglect the opportunity of sending you, by Mr Hamilton Rowan, the honest tribute of our esteem and admiration for your brave and manly resistance to the alleged jurisdiction of the Irish Aristocracy.

Permit us to offer you our thanks, and our grateful acknowledgments of your efforts in what we consider as a common cause, while we lament our inability of proving ourselves useful in your defence.

Although we are of different kingdoms, still we are but one people; and as the freedom of our continent has already spread its influence to Europe, so on the other hand we are persuaded, that the establishment of despotism in Ireland will end in the slavery of Great Britain. But the light of liberty is not confined to one shore or one latitude.

We know that it is easier to admire than to practise those virtues that tend to the public benefit. Yet so long as the exertions of a few courageous men must influence the minds of at least the independent and thinking part of the community, we are assured that their labour is not fruitless. We trust therefore the time will soon arrive, when the abuse of

power in either nation will have no other consequence than the ruin of those who have committed that injustice. We hope, and we doubt not, of soon seeing the day, when the post of honour shall be no longer that of obloquy and punishment, but when those who have risked their liberty and fortune in the cause of their countrymen, may find protection in the undisturbed, uninterrupted exercise of trial by jury, with a full and adequate representation of the people in Parliament.

At a Meeting, 10th April 1793.

Read an answer directed to be prepared to the letter received from the United Political Societies in Norwich.

Resolved, That the said answer be sent by the Secretary to the Secretary of the said Societies.

Mr ——— read an answer (directed to be prepared by him) to the letter received from Mr ——— of Birmingham.

Read a letter from Mr Hamilton Rowan to the Secretary of this Society.

Ordered, That the said letter be entered in the books of this Society.

Mr Hamilton Rowan presents his compliments to Mr Adams; he did intend to have done himself the pleasure of waiting on him, but has been so intolerably hurried by private business as to have been prevented from his purpose, and fears he shall not have it in his power before he leaves this town for Ireland, which will be either on Monday evening or early on Tuesday morning. He knows that no more plausible sensation can be received by Messrs Butler and Reid, as well as by all those gentlemen who are sitting with them, and who, though not under protest, are liable to future prosecution, than the countenance and support of those who are really engaged in the cause of man in general, and such we believe the members of the Society for Constitutional Information to be, and as such H. R. in particular will remember the kind fraternity with which he had the honour of being received by them; and, as a member of the United Irillation of Dub-

En, would be happy to have it in his power to return the compliment in his own country.

Othorpe's Hotel, Adelphi,

7th April 1793.

At a Meeting, 11th June 1793.

Read the Sheffield and Nottingham petitions to the House of Commons.

Resolved, That a Committee be appointed to prepare an Address to the British nation; and that the said Committee be an open Committee.

At a Meeting, 18th June 1793.

Copies of two petitions from the town of Nottingham presented.

Resolved, That a Committee be appointed to prepare an Address to the British nation.

Resolved, That [two members, who are named] be requested to prepare the said Address.

At a Meeting, 15th October 1793.

Read a letter from the Secretary to the Society for Constitutional Information at Coventry, to ——— accompanied with four addresses from the said Society.

Resolved, That the thanks of this Society be returned to the Coventry Society, for their communication.

Mr Spedair read a letter, with an Address from Mr Skelving, Secretary to the Convention of the Friends of the People in Scotland, to the Secretary to the London Corresponding Society.

Resolved, That an extraordinary general meeting of this Society be called for Monday next, at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, at six o'clock in the evening, to consider of the utility and propriety of sending Delegates to a Convention of Delegates of the different Societies in Great Britain, to be held at Edinburgh, for the purpose of obtaining a Parliamentary Reform.

Resolved, That the substance of the motion be inserted in the letter.

At a Meeting, 25th October 1797.

Read addresses to the Friends of the People of Parliamentary Reform, signed by Wm. Skirving, Secretary to the General Convention at Edinburgh.

Resolved, That this Society do send Delegates to the ensuing Convention to be held in Edinburgh for promoting a Reform in Parliament.

Resolved, That two members of this Society be elected as Delegates to the said Convention.

Resolved, That the Secretary do deliver to the Delegates appointed by this Society, to represent them in the Convention at Edinburgh, copies of the proceedings of the 25th and 26th instant, by which they are appointed to that office.

Instructions to the Delegates.

The Delegates are instructed, on the part of this Society, to assist in bringing forward and supporting any constitutional measures for procuring a real Representation of the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament. That, in specifying the reforms to be demanded of existing abuses, the Delegates ought never to lose sight of the two essential principles, General Suffrage and Annual Representation, together with the reasonable right in the People to Reform; and that a reasonable and known compensation ought to be made to the representatives of the nation, by a national contribution.

That the Delegates do punctually correspond with the Society, for the purpose of communicating information, and of receiving such farther instructions as the exigency may require.

Resolved, That the above be the directions to the Delegates.

Resolved, That seven guineas be allowed to each of the Delegates for travelling; and a sum not exceeding Three Guineas per week each, be allowed them during the sitting of the Convention of Delegates; and that a subscription be now opened for that purpose, and that the Secretary be requested to receive the sum.

Resolved, That the proceedings of Friday the 25th, and

Monday the 28th October 1793, be signed by the Chairman and Secretary.

Resolved, That the Secretary be requested to write to the different Societies with which this Society is in correspondence, informing them that the London Corresponding Society, together with this Society, have elected Delegates to the Convention of Delegates, to meet at Edinburgh on the 10th instant; and to request their concurrence in this important measure.

At a Meeting, 8th November 1793.

Read letters from the Constitutional Societies at Sheffield, Leeds, and Birmingham, in answer to the Secretary's letters of the 28th ultimo.

At a Meeting, 6th December 1793.

Read a letter from Mr ———, Delegate from this Society at Edinburgh, dated 5th November, with the Secretary's answer to that letter; and also another letter from Mr ———, dated 21st November.

Resolved, That a general meeting of this Society be called for the second Friday in January next, for the purpose of considering the important letters received from the Delegates, Mr ———.

Resolved, That a Committee be appointed to correspond with our Delegate, Mr ———.

At a Meeting, 10th January 1794.

Resolved, That the important letters received from Mr ———, the Delegate from this Society to the Convention at Edinburgh, and the subsequent proceedings of that Convention, be taken into consideration on Friday next, and that a general meeting of the Society be called for that purpose.

At a Meeting, 15th January 1794.

Resolved, That law ceases to be an object of obedience, whenever it becomes an instrument of oppression.

Resolved, That we recollect to mind, with the deepest satisfaction, the merited fate of the infamous Jeffries, once Lord Chief Justice of England, who, at the age of the glorious Re-

Printed at the press, formerly of Mr. G. T. and now of Mr. J. Johnson, in the Strand, in a revolution,

velation, for the many iniquitous sentences which he had pitied, was torn to pieces by a brave and injured people.

†Replied, That those who follow his example deserve his fire.

Resolved, That the Tweed, though it may divide countries, ought not, and does not, make a separation between those principles of common severity, in which Englishmen and Scotchmen are equally interested; that injustice in Scotland is injustice in England; and that the safety of Englishmen is endangered whenever their brethren of Scotland, for a conduct which entitles them to the approbation of all wits, and the support of all brave men, are sentenced to Botany Bay, a punishment hitherto confined only to felons.

Resolved, That we see with regret, but we see without fear, that the period is fast approaching when the liberties of Britons must depend not upon reason, to which they have long appealed, nor on their powers of expelling it, but on their firm and undaunted resolution to oppose tyranny by the same means by which it is exercised.

Resolved, That we approve of the conduct of the British Convention, who, though assailed by force, have not been answered by argument; and who, unlike the members of a certain assembly, have no interest distinct from the common body of the people.

Resolved, That a copy of the above resolutions be transmitted to Clissac William Skirving, Secretary to the British Convention, who is now imprisoned, under colour of law, in the Tolbooth of Edinburgh.

Resolved, That the Resolutions now passed be published in the next papers.

Read a letter from Mr Hardy Secretary to the London Corresponding Society.

At a Meeting, 14th January 1794.

A motion was made, That it be resolved, That the *most excellent Address* of the London Corresponding Society be inserted in the books of this Society, and that the King's Speech to HIS Parliament be inserted UNDER it, in order that they

public principles, and of the most uniform and upright conduct in the pursuit of those principles, be chosen an honorary member of this Society.

Resolved, That these resolutions be communicated to Mr. Rowan by the Secretary of this Society.

At a Meeting, 21st March 1794.

Resolved unanimously, That the Secretary of this Society be directed to write to the friends of Peace and Reform at Sheffield; and to assure them, that this Society views with pleasure their steady exertions to obtain a fair Representation of the people of Great Britain in Parliament, and the proper methods which may be appointed for public Fasts.

At a Meeting, 18th March 1794.

Read a letter from the London Corresponding Society.

Resolved, That the same be entered on the books of this Society.

Glasgow,

March 27th 1794.

I am directed by the London Corresponding Society to transmit the following Resolutions to the Society for Constitutional Information, and to request the sentiments of that Society respecting the important measures which the present juncture of affairs seems to require.

The London Corresponding Society conceive that the moment is arrived, when a full and explicit declaration is necessary from all the friends of Freedom—whether the late illegal and unbecoming prosecutions and sentences shall determine us to abandon our cause, or shall excite us to pursue a radical reform with an ardour proportioned to the magnitude of the object, and with a zeal as distinguished on our parts as the transgressors of others in the same glorious cause is extensive. The Society for Constitutional Information is therefore required to determine whether or no they will be ready, when called upon, to act in conjunction with this and other Societies, to obtain a fair representation of the PEOPLE—Whether they concur with us in feeling the necessity of a speedy Convention, for the purpose of obtaining, in a constitutional and legal method, a redress of those grievances under which we at present labour, and which can only be effectually removed by

a full and fair representation of the PEOPLE of Great Britain. The London Corresponding Society cannot but trust that their friends, that the present crisis demands all the prudence, unanimity, and vigour, that ever may or can be exerted by MEN and BRITONS; nor do they doubt but what Manly Firmness and constancy will finally, and they believe shortly, terminate in the full accomplishment of all their wishes.

I am, Fellow Citizens,

(In my humble measure)

A friend to the Rights of Man.

(Signed) — Secretary.

Resolved unanimously, 1st, That dear as JUSTICE and LIBERTY are to Britons, yet the value of them is comparatively small without a dependence on their permanency; and there can be no security for the continuance of any right but in EQUAL LAWS.

2^d, That equal laws can never be expelled but by a full and fair representation of the people; to obtain which, is the way pointed out by the Constitution, *See* *here* and is the sole object of this Society. For this we are ready to hazard every thing, and never, but with our lives, will we relinquish an object which involves the happiness, or even the political existence of ourselves and posterity.

3^d, That it is the decided opinion of this Society, that, to secure ourselves from future illegal and scandalous prosecutions, to prevent a repetition of wicked and unjust sentences, and to recall those wise and wholesome laws that have been wrested from us, and of which scarcely a vestige remain, there ought to be immediately a CONVENTION of the PEOPLE, by Delegates deputed for that purpose from the different Societies of the Friends of Freedom, assembled in the various parts of this nation. And we pledge ourselves to the Public, to pursue every legal method speedily to accomplish so desirable a purpose.

P. S. I have to inform you that a General Meeting of the Society will be holden on Monday the 14th April, the place to be ascertained by public advertisement.

Resolved,

Resolved, That it is fit and proper, and the duty of this Society, to send an answer to the London Corresponding Society.

Ordered, That the Secretary acquaint the London Corresponding Society, that we have received their communication, and heartily concur with them in the objects they have in view; and that, for the purpose of a more speedy and effectual co-operation, we invite them to send to this Society next Friday Evening a delegation of some of their members.

At a Meeting, 4th April 1794.

Read a Letter from the Committee of the London Corresponding Society, acquainting this Society that they had deputed [several persons] to hold a conference with the members of this Society. Five persons attended from the London Corresponding Society.

Resolved, That a delegation of five members of this Society be appointed to meet the members deputed by the London Corresponding Society.

Resolved, That this deputation do confer with the deputies of the London Corresponding Society.

Resolved, That there be appointed a Committee of Correspondence of the members of this Society.

Ordered, That [six persons] compose the Committee.

At a Meeting, 11th April 1794.

My ——— made the report of the meeting of the delegates of the London Corresponding Society, for the purpose of this Society co-operating with the London Corresponding Society; and that they had come to the following resolutions:

1st, Resolved, That it appears to this Committee very desirable that a general meeting or Convention of the Friends of Liberty should be called, for the purpose of taking into consideration the proper methods of obtaining a full and fair Representation of the people.

2d, Resolved, That it is recommended to the Society for Constitutional Inquiry and the London Corresponding Society, to institute a regular and pressing correspondence with

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all

all those parts of the country where such measures may be likely to be promoted, not only to instigate the Societies already formed, but to endeavour also to produce such other associations as may further the general object.

11. Resolved, That it appears to this Committee, that the general object will be much promoted, if a standing Committee of co-operation between the two Societies were established, for the purpose of holding personal communication with such members of similar Societies, in other parts of the country, as may occasionally be in London, and who may be authorized by their respective Societies to act with such Committee.

Read the following Letter from the Secretary to the London Corresponding Society.

Citizens,

April 10th, 1794.

I am ordered by the Committee of Delegates of the London Corresponding Society, to inform the Society for Constitutional Information, that they approve of the resolutions of the Committee of conference.

Therefore the London Corresponding Society have chosen [five persons] to put in practice immediately the second and third resolutions of that Committee.

(Signed) ———, Secretary.

———— Secretary to the Society

for Constitutional Information.

Resolved, That the Report of the Committee of delegates from the London Corresponding Society, and of this Society, be entered on the books of this Society.

18. Resolved, That it appears to this Society very desirable that a general meeting of the Friends of Liberty should be called, for the purpose of taking into consideration the proper methods of obtaining a full and fair representation of the people.

19. Resolved, That it appears to this Society that the general object will be much promoted if a Standing Committee of co-operation were established, for the purpose of holding personal communication with such ——— of similar Societies in other parts of the country, as may occasionally be in London,

don, and who may be authorized by their respective Societies to act with such Committees.

Resolved, That the Committee of Correspondence, already appointed by this Society, be the Committee for co-operation and communication with the Committees of other Societies.

Ordered, That the Secretary be desired to send a letter to the London Corresponding Society, acquainting them with the members of this Society appointed to confer with them.

Resolved, That Mr ——— be requested to accept of the office of Secretary to the Committee of Correspondence.

Mr ——— being present, accepted of the said office.

At a Meeting, 4th May 1794.

Read a pamphlet, containing certain proceedings of the London Corresponding Society, and of this Society.

Resolved, That two thousand of the same be printed by this Society.

Appendix D.

Copy of a letter from the Society for Constitutional Information at Sheffield, to the Editors of the English Chronicle.

Sheffield, 15th January 1792.

Gentlemen,

THE Society for Constitutional Information now established at Sheffield, in the county of York, being desirous of forming a connection with all the like Societies in England, and especially with those, or some of them, in London, the Thatched House, the London Tavern, or others, humbly solicits your advice and assistance in the accomplishing thereof, in order to form our resolves similar to theirs; because, as we are actuated by the same cause and principle, and all our interests being one, our sentiments ought and must be the same.

Your information of the method, terms, and manner of application,

cious, for the above purpose, as likewise to have one of our friends admitted a member of theirs, so as a regular communication may be carried on between us, being directed to us, will be *granted a particular favour, and gratefully acknowledged by this Society*; and the expense incurred by your attention to this business shall be duly paid to your order, either to the postmaster here, or as you may please to direct; for and by the order of this Society.

I am respectfully

Your sincere friend, —————

[The following paragraphs are added in the same hand.]

As the manner of our beginning to associate on this occasion was somewhat singular, we beg your permission to mention a few remarks thereon.

It first originated in an assembly of five or six mechanics, who, by their meeting at some two of their houses, and conversing about the enormous high price of provisions, &c.—the gross abuse this nation labours under from the unbounded authority of the Monopoliſters of all ranks, from the King to the peasant; the waste and lavish of the public property by pensions, perquisites, luxury, and debauchery, sources of the grievous burthen under which this nation groans; together with the mock Representation of the people—these being the subjects of their conversation, they concluded that nothing but darkness and ignorance in the people could suffer the natural rights of every freeman to be thus violated; and this excited them to invite and visit their neighbours, whence a small Society of twenty or thirty soon commenced, and kept increasing, so that they were obliged to divide into separate bodies; and, at this time, they have formed eight of these smaller Societies, which meet each at their different houses, all on the same evening: this preserves good order, and none are admitted without his ticket, that they are perfectly safe from being intruded upon, and perfect regular good order kept up; these meet every two weeks. Their general meeting, at which some hundreds attend, is held once a month, at [a part appears here to be torn off] but true knowledge will progressively extend itself with the same effect, throughout this whole nation, as it

which hitherto done here. We have now in the Press a re-publication of *Paine's Rights of Man*, for 1803 Copies, by 1400 Subscribers, at the low price of Sixpence each copy, to which we purpose to annex an abstract of the noted Iniquitous Cora Bill of last year.

We have also had an impression here of that famous Address, signed by J. H. Tooke, Esq; Chairman; whose address we should like to be favoured with.

Please to favour us with your answer to the above as soon as convenient; and if you can form any thing from the above, worthy of your truly laudable paper, you are at liberty; but as it was not thought of at our meeting, it is not properly methodised and adjusted, as it stands, for that purpose—we mean, in future, to trouble you with something of the kind for that purpose.

Copy of a Letter from the Secretary to the London Corresponding Society, to the Chairman of the Society for Constitutional Information.

Thursday, 14th March 1792.

Sir,

The Delegates of the Corresponding Society think it their duty to acquaint you, without delay, of the subscription begun on Monday last, at this place, for the defence of the prosecution said to be commenced against your worthy member Mr Thomas Paine, in consequence of his valuable publication, intitled The Rights of Man.

The division assembled here on that evening amounted to about twenty persons. At the desire of one of our members, Mr Paine's letter to Mr Secretary Dundas was read; after which the subscription was proposed, and immediately signed by every one present: We have just learnt that the division N^o 5. of this Society likewise began their subscription on Tuesday last.—It is our intention to recommend to each of our several divisions the performance of the same laudable design; and we doubt not but that a numerous body of our countrymen will be found to follow an example so just in itself, and

is essential to the support of that fourth portion of liberty which the people of England are still supposed to enjoy. The approbation and the encouragement which our stable endeavours have met with from the Constitutional Society, make us desirous of doing more strongly and more immediately with you.—For this purpose, we wish that five of our members might be admitted among you, after the manner of those whom you received from the Societies established at Sheffield and Norwich.—Considering that should this plan be adopted generally, it could not fail to strengthen the cause in which we are engaged, we beg the favour of you to propose it at your next meeting, and to submit to the decision of your Society thereupon.

I am, Sir, with great attachment and esteem,

Your most obedient Servant,

—————, Secretary.

Sheffield Society for Constitutional Information. 42

Copy of a letter from the Sheffield Society to Mr ———, the Secretary of the Society for Constitutional Information.

Sir,

It is now about four months since this Society first formed itself into a regular body, then but very few in number; the enclosed will inform you of their increase, and which is not probable will soon become very numerous, and not only the large and populous towns, but the whole neighbourhood for many miles round about, have an attentive eye upon us; and of the towns and villages indeed are forming themselves into similar associations, and so fully address to the mode of copying after us; you will easily conceive the necessity for the leading members of this body to pay strict attention to good order and regularity, and the need we have of consulting and consulting with those who are sincere friends and able advocates for the same cause; for these reasons we took the liberty of writing to Mr Horne Tooke, that worthy friend and patriot for the Rights of the People, informing him of our earnest desire of entering into a connection with the Society of the same denomination with ours in London: His very obliging and effectual

devote sincere favours us with your address; in consequence, we have taken the liberty herewith to transmit to you some resolves which was passed at our last meetings by the whole body, and the Committee was charged with the dispatch of printing and forwarding them to you accordingly, for the purpose of submitting them to the consideration of your Society, to make such use of them as they think most prudent.

You will also notice the *Anger Address*; they applied to us about two months ago for instructions as to our mode of conducting, &c. had not then formed themselves into any regular association. Welgar is nearly thirty miles from this place, in Derbyshire, and eight or ten miles from Derby.

If the Society for Constitutional Information in London should vouchsafe so far to notice us as to enter into a connection and correspondence with us, it cannot fail of promoting honour and adding strength to our feeble endeavours, and to the common cause, which is the entire motive we have in view.

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With the greatest respect and esteem,

Your answers Aboard.

Sheffield,
14th May 1931.

By order of } _____
the Committee, }

We have taken the liberty of inclosing a parcel for Mr _____, in answer to a letter from him to this Society, requesting some information concerning our method of conducting the business we are embarked in, &c. : Also informing us there are in London a number of mechanics, shopkeepers, &c. forming themselves into a Society as the *brethren of the Rights of Man*. You will be so obliging as to let the packet remain with you until he call for it, as by this post I have wrote him thereof. We have given him our manner of proceeding, from our setting out to this time, and hope it may be of some use; the improvement we are about to adopt is certainly the best for managing *large bodies*, as in *great and populous towns*, viz. *dividing them into small bodies, or meetings*.

¹¹ *Index of economic complexity* (11). (As the number of countries is small, we did not use the following year.)

*of ten persons each, and these ten to appoint a Delegate: The six
these Delegates first consider meeting, and so on, delegating from
one to another, till at last are reduced to a proper number for
constituting the Convention, or Grand Council.*

Please to forward the packet to Mr ——— as soon as con-
venient.

*Copy of a Letter from the Society for Constitutional Informa-
tion at Sheffield, to the Society for Constitutional Information
in London.*

Gentlemen,

This Society, feeling as they do the grievous effects of the
present corrupt State defects, and abuse of our country, the
great and heavy oppressions which the common mass of the
people labour under, as the natural consequences of that cor-
ruption; and, at the same time, being sensible, to a degree of
certainty, that the public minds and general sentiments of the
people are determined to obtain a RADICAL REFORM OF
THE COUNTRY, as soon as prudence and discretion will per-
mit, believe it their duty to make use of every prudent
means, as far as their abilities can be extended, to obtain so
salutary and desirable an object as a thorough Reformation of
our Country, established upon that system which is consistent with
the Rights of Man. For these reasons, with great deference
and submission to the members of the Society for Consti-
tutional Information in London, we beg leave to request that
they will be pleased to admit the persons of the following
names annexed hereto as members of their Society (they be-
ing our friends, and members of our Society), in order that
a close connection may be stamped, and a regular communica-
tion maintained between the two bodies; that being thus
strengthened, this Society may be better enabled to govern it-
self with more propriety, and to render assistance to their fel-
low citizens in this neighbourhood, and in parts more remote;
that they, in their turn, may extend useful knowledge still
further, from town to village; and from village to town, until
the whole nation be sufficiently enlightened, and united in the same
cause.

1896, which cannot fail of being the case wherever the great English words of Mr Thomas Paine find reference.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your most respectful and sincere friend,

Sheffield,

By order of

24th March 1792.

the Committee,

Secretary for this Society.

Names of the twelve members of the Society for Constitutional Information in Sheffield, requested to be entered as members of the Society of the same denomination in London.

Copy of a letter from the Sheffield Society for Constitutional Information, to the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society: Received 19th March 1792.

Dear Sir,

Your letter of the 8th instant to Mr _____ was yesterday handed to us, by means of that Gentleman: He is not a member of this Society, and therefore cannot perfectly answer your requests respecting the rules and orders of this Society. It affords us infinite satisfaction that the people in London are beginning to form themselves into orderly Societies, and taking into their consideration the great importance and the necessity of a *Reform of the corrupt State of our Government* ; a work, then which none is more useful in this nation, for

the relief of the oppressed: The noble observation in regard, is worthy of the acceptance of all, viz. "That no man who
" is an advocate from principle for the liberty of a black man,
" but will strenuously promote and support the rights of a
" white man, and vice versa."

The enclosed, sent to Mr ——— as before, will inform you of the principles we set out upon, when at first a very small number, some four or five of us, meeting in each others houses in an evening, consulting and consoling the very low and even miserable condition the people of this nation were reduced to by the avariciousness and extortion of that haughty, voluptuous, and luxurious class of beings, who would have us to possess no more knowledge, than to believe all things were created only for the use of that small group of worthless individuals. With these sentiments, and perusing Mr Fane's Rights of Man, maturely considering the force and weight of argument therein contained, by degrees became confirmed in our judgment, that pride, ambition, luxury, and oppression, with every vice, appeared to be at the height, or nearly at the utmost stretch; and, admitting this to be the case (as we really do believe it is), we may with the greatest probability expect it cannot be very long before a great and perhaps a general change will take place, which will redound with more happiness to the people, as their manners and moral practices are more consistent to the Divine will of the all-wise Disposer of all things, in heaven and on earth.

On these principles our numbers kept increasing, so that we found it necessary, for the sake of good order, to *discontinue* *to small bodies*, of ten persons each, and to hold a general meeting once a month; but of late our numbers have increased so rapidly, and only having thirteen meeting places, all of the same evening, they are so crowded, that we are adopting the plan we first set out with, and to divide the whole (which do now consist of about 1000 members) into cythings, or meetings of ten members each;—Two hundred of these meetings will include the whole, from each of which a delegate or leading man will be chosen, and appointed to attend at their respective places.—Ten at each: These 200 delegates will keep twenty meetings, of ten members each; and lastly, from each of

of these meetings, a delegate will be appointed to meet at the appointed place, and these will form the Committee, or the Grand Council: By this method, order and regularity will be maintained; and by this method a regular communication throughout the whole nation might be kept up with the most perfect harmony—and we would particularly recommend it to you in London, as worthy your adoption. As you increase in numbers, necessity will confirm these sentiments. We shall be glad at any time to correspond, and be in close connection with you; as our cause is one, so ought our sentiments to be unanimous: We also would recommend you to enter into connection with the members of the Society for Constitutional Information in London, of whom Mr ——— is one; and we are fully assured that gentlemen will be the true friend and advocate in our cause, consistent with his principles hitherto manifested, both in public and private. We have inclosed a packet directed to you, with a parcel to Mr ——— in ———, who is Secretary for the said Society, and who will deliver it to you when you call for it, it containing some information.

Copy of Resolutions transmitted to the Society for Constitutional Information.

At a Meeting of the delegates of the United Constitutional Societies, held the 14th of March 1793, at the Wheel of Fortune, Saint Edmunds, in the city of Norwich, it was unanimously agreed to communicate to the gentlemen of the London Society for Constitutional Information the following resolutions:

1st, We are happy to see the success of the Sheffield Society for Constitutional Reform, and approve of the resolutions which you and they have made, in order to form a plan of general information; we humbly beg that you would grant us the same favour, and it is our wish, that all the Societies of a similar kind in England were only as so many members strongly and indissolubly united in one political body.

2^{dly}, We believe that instructing the People in political knowledge, and in their natural and inherent rights as men, is the only effectual way to obtain the grand object of Reform; for men need only be made acquainted with the abuses of Gov-

verypost, and they will readily join in every lawful means to obtain Redress. We have the pleasure to inform you that our Societies consist of some hundreds; and new Societies are frequently forming, which by delegates perform a mutual intercourse with each other for instruction and information; and the great-
 est care has been taken to preserve order and regularity in our meetings, to convince the world that riot and disorder are no parts of our political creed.

3dly, We believe and are firmly persuaded, that Mr Burke (the true friend of liberty) has translated the greatest and most glorious Revolution ever recorded in the annals of history.— We thank Mr Burke for the political discussion provoked, and by which he has opened unto us the dawn of a glorious day.

4thly, To Mr Thomas Price our thanks are especially due, for his *First and Second part of the Rights of Man*; and we sincerely wish that he may live to see his labours crowned with success, in the great diffusion of Liberty and happiness among Mankind.

5thly, We view with concern the late discoveries relative to the Westminster election, in 1781; and conceive ourselves, and all true friends of Freedom, under great obligations to Messrs Thomas, Wyndham, Francis, Taylor, and all the noble and spirited MINORITY, for their exertions in order to discover the true source of that abominable and indigulous procedure.

6thly, We congratulate our brethren in the various parts of the kingdom, on the progress of political knowledge, and earnestly interest them to increase their exertions, in order to form one grand and extensive union of all the friends of general Liberty.—And we hope the time is not far distant, when the People of England will be equally and faithfully represented in Parliament.

Signed by Order,

Chairman.

Copy

Copy of a Letter from the Secretary to the London Corresponding Society, to the President of the Society for Constitutional Information.

Sir,

I am ordered by the Committee to send to the Society for Constitutional Information in London a copy of our motives for associating, and the resolutions we have come to. We mean to persevere in the cause we have embarked in; that is, to have (if possible) an equal Representation of the People of this nation in Parliament.

We should be exceedingly happy to enter into a correspondence with that Society, if it is not too much presumption in us to expect such an honour; but as our cause is one, we hope that they will deign to take some notice of us, who are now entering upon a matter of such vast importance.

You will see, by one of our resolutions, that we have entered into a correspondence with the Society at Sheffield.

I am, Sir,

With all deference,

Your most obedient

March 30th, 1792.

and most humble Servant,

Copy of a letter from Lord John Russell to J. Cartwright Esqre, Chairman of the Society for Constitutional Information.

Sir,

Fully sensible that the Society for Constitutional Information have made no sacrifice to decency in their Address to us, we on our part shall affect no disguise.

Voluntary associations, not being armed with public authority, have no force but that of truth, no hope of success but in the strength of reason, and the concurrence of the public.

We profess not to entertain a wish, "that the great plan of public benefit, which Mr Paine has so powerfully recommended will speedily be carried into effect," nor to excite

our

our fellow-citizens with the magnificent promise of obtaining for them " the Rights of the People in their full extent,"—the indefinite language of delusion, which, by opening unbounded prospects of political adventure, tends to delug the public opinion which is the support of all free governments, and to excite a spirit of innovation, of which no wisdom can foresee the effects, and no skill direct the course. We view man as he is, the creature of habit, as well as of reason. We think it therefore our bounden duty to propose no extreme changes, which, however specious in theory, can never be accomplished without violence to the settled opinions of mankind, nor attempted without endangering some of the most efficacious advantages which we confidently enjoy. We are convinced that the people bear a fixed attachment to the happy form of our Government, and the genuine principles of our Constitution; that we cherish as objects of just affection, not from any implicit reverence, or habitual superstition, but as institutions best calculated to produce the happiness of man in civil society: And it is because we are convinced that abuses are undermining and corrupting them, that we have associated for the preservation of those principles.

" We wish to reform the Constitution, because we wish to preserve it."

Affections formed in the face of power, in opposition to the interests of our present Legislators, evince that individual security and personal independence are already established by our laws.

The immense accumulation of debt, the enormous taxation of Seventeen Millions of annual revenue, demonstrate that the collective interests of the community have been neglected or betrayed.

We believe the defective Constitution of the Assembly, entrusted with the public purse, to be the real source of this evil. With this view we have pledged ourselves to attempt a timely and salutary Reform, adhering, in every measure we may take, to the fundamental principles of the Constitution. According to these acknowledged principles, the people have a perfect right to possess an organ, by which the public mind may

Resolved, That, together with the answer of this Society to the letter of the Society for Constitutional Information, there be transmitted to John Cartwright, Esquire, Chairman of that Society, a copy of the Resolution of the Society of the Friends of the People, to print and publish the letter and reply.

JOHN RUSSELL, Chairman.

Copy of a Letter from Carlisle, to the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society. Received 17th Sept. 1791.

Dear Sir,

In obedience to the wishes of the Society here, I have the pleasure of acknowledging the honour of your letter, and the packet which the kindness of our brothers of the London Corresponding Society so opportunely presented us with.

It is doubly deserving our thanks, as it shows your kindness, and as it will be useful in the formation of our infant Society: We stand much in need of your experience in this particular, and we doubt not of your best assistance. We are surrounded by a majority, a formidable one indeed, in power, abilities, and numbers, but we are not dismayed.

We have carefully perused the Address, and I am to observe on their contents in general, that the sentiments *hardly rise to that height which we expect from men, sensible of their full claims to absolute and unalienable liberty; i. e. unaccountable to any power which they have not immediately constituted and appointed.*

These are our sentiments, whatever may be yours, tho' in the present state of political knowledge, it may be prudent not to avow them openly. We desire your sentiments on the means of accomplishing that object which we profess you have in view in common with us. We think it expedient that we should perfectly understand each other in the beginning, lest the appearance of division might furnish matter of triumph to our enemies. We observe one expression, which says, "numerous other reforms would undoubtedly take place, &c. &c." But we ask, how is that Parliament to be chosen? Can we expect it
from

from the present order of things? Would not all the evil be done away at once by the people assembled in Convention? Does it appear probable, that the odious laws which we complain of will be abolished any other way? Can the grievances arising from Aristocracy be redressed, while the ——— retains its prepotent authority in the Legislature? Is the universal right of suffrage ever to be attained, while the B—— maintain their seats on the ———.

Your thoughts on these important points we most earnestly desire may be transmitted to us as soon as possible: Not directed as the bill; we fear it will excite suspicion. Direct to Mr ———, Stockport, who is Chairman occasionally in the absence of ———, who resides too far from hence to be at hand on emergencies.

Yours, &c.

Copy of a Letter from Mr. Morgan to the Friends of Universal Peace and of the Rights of Man Society at Stockport.

Sir,

London, 11th October 1791.

With infinite satisfaction the London Corresponding Society Committee perused your letter: They are happy to learn your steady determination, spite of all obstacles, to pursue that sole means of political felicity, a perfect Representation of the People.

With regard to our publications, our sentiments are expressed in as strong terms as prudence will permit, yet plain enough we imagine to convince the public, that while we expect every thing from an honest and an ardent Parliament, nothing short of such a Senate, chosen by the whole nation, will satisfy us.

True generosity, the characteristic of this nation, and of all unperverted men throughout the globe, calling upon us to countenance, at this juncture, the arduous struggle of the French nation against Despotism and Aristocracy, these foes to the human race, we have resolved upon addressing the French National Convention.

Without entering into the probable effects of such a measure, effects which your Society will not fail to discover, we

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invites

invite you to join us ; and to that end, herewith you have a copy of our intended Address ; if you approve the idea, and will concur in sending it, be pleased to return us without delay a copy, signed by your President and Secretary, or by the Delegates, stating each for how many persons he signs, we will then affiliate your body with ours, and with some others who have already effected to the measure.—If, on the contrary, you disapprove that mark of zeal towards the only nation that has hitherto undertaken to restore to mankind its just rights, please to communicate to us your objections.

I am, Sir,

For the Committee of Delegates,

Yours, &c.

M. M. Ch.

Copy of a Letter from the Editors of the Patriot, to the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society.

Sir,

Sheffield, October 15th, 1792.

Having nothing particular to communicate to your Society at the time of the publication of our last number, we contented ourselves with a general acknowledgment of the receipt of your favour. We now gladly embrace this opportunity of especially thanking you for the same, and at the same time assuring you, that the communications you sent us shall appear in the next number of the Patriot.

We beg leave also to show in our note of commendation on the laudable spirit which you have evinced, in your intention to address the National Convention of France ; and hope sincerely, that your example will be followed by all the Societies in the two Kingdoms, Ireland having already set the example.

Within these few days we have received a letter from the Secretary of a Society intended to be formed at Stockport, a very populous manufacturing town, only seven miles from Manchester, a copy of which we think it necessary to send you herewith, by which you will see the unjustifiable opposition which is making by the enemies to a Reform, and the friendly

and

and tools of arbitrary power, against the interests of these Sages, and the attempt to crush and annihilate our efforts in the cause of Freedom in the very bud. We thought it our duty to answer the letter immediately, in order to give them every encouragement within the scope of our feeble abilities; and herewith also send your Society a copy of our letter on that occasion; but we are apprehensive that the voice of a few individuals may not have weight enough to answer the wish—*for God, of inspiring them with sufficient confidence to persevere.* *We hope your Society will also give them your sanction, advice, and support, as it will be in vain for the Friends to Reform to contend with the tremendous host of enemies they have to encounter, unless they firmly, on all occasions, stand by and support one another.*

It is with the greatest satisfaction we announce to you, that several Societies have been formed within the last three weeks in Edinburgh, not less than seven or eight; and also, that a Patriotic Print is about to make its appearance, under the direction of Major Johnson, who is also President of one of the Societies. We have received some most spirited communications from these; and our bookseller has sent an order for 50 additional numbers of every publication of our work more than what was before in circulation, with an assurance that it was daily increasing in sale and demand for it. We clearly foresee that Scotland will soon take the lead of this country, and conscious it will be necessary to take the greatest care that an universal communication should be constantly kept up between the several Societies, however distant, and that all should determine to act upon the same principle, and move together, as near as may be, in regular and active union. "Twas by this method France became so thoroughly united; and we must never to lose sight of it.

The Sheffield Society has been lately revised and re-organized, and in a very short time they will present the public with an Address, and a set of Rules, Regulations, and Resolutions, which I think will do them infinite credit.

We shall be happy to hear from your Society on every occasion that may be agreeable and convenient; and any communications

manuscripts which in future they may wish to convey to the public through the medium of the Patriot, they may rely on in every attention and regard shall be paid to them.

We remain, with respect,
Fellow Citizens,
Yours most respectfully,
The Editors of the Patriot.

*Copy of a Letter from Leicester, to the Secretary of the Society
for Constitutional Information.*

Leicester, 9th November 1792.

Sir,

As I have not yet heard from you, I hope you will not omit my request, and forward every necessary particular by the first mail.

We are to have our first adjourned meeting on Monday evening next; and I wish our Secretary to be well prepared to meet every expectation and every objection.

We shall stand in need of a list of credit for immediate publication.

I am, &c.

*Copy of a Letter from the Society for Political Information at
Norwich, to the Secretary to the London Corresponding So-
ciety.*

Mr Secretary,

Norwich, November 12th, 1792.

Sir,

We, the Society for Political Information, are desirous of holding and strenuously supporting the noble sentiments which you so kindly and friendly dispersed among us; and as we so much admire your well-adapted plan for a Reformation in the State, permit us, with the utmost deference to your worthy Society, to participate with you in all your great national correspondence, which your very name promises to maintain; and in consequence thereof, it is humbly desired, by the Society which I have the happiness to represent, to incorporate

three members with your worthy fraternity ; in doing which I shall here inform you of their names and residence, which are as follows, — — — — —. Our principal design in doing this is, that we may have an opportunity of knowing more exactly what may be thought the most eligible steps to be taken in carrying on this great business of our associated brethren, and so have an opportunity to ask such sort of questions as may be thought very reasonable among the brethren, especially when we think that publications are covered with a sort of obscurity in it, as the Sheffield People's declaration, which seemed determined to support the Duke of Richmond's plan only ; but since we find, in a pointed letter received from them in a book, that they mean to abide by some moderate Reform, as may hereafter be brought forward by the Friends of the People, which method is uncertain to us. Again, we find that the Friends of the People, and the Society for Constitutional Information do not exactly agree ; — we could be glad to know the reason. It seems to me as though the difference was this ; — The Friends of the People mean only a partial Reform, because they leave out the words expressing the Duke of Richmond's plan, and talk only of a Reform ; while the Manchester People seem to insist, by *addressing Mr Paine*, as though they were intent upon *Republican principles only*. Now, to come closer to the main question, it is only desired to know whether the generality of the Societies mean to rest satisfied with the Duke of Richmond's plan only ; OR, WHETHER IT IS THEIR PRIVATE DESIGN TO RIP UP MONARCHY BY THE ROOTS, AND PLACE DEMOCRACY IN ITS STEAD. I shall now, Sir, give you an exact account of what plan I could wish to obtain, which I have already moved for at our general meeting, viz. a full and equal Representation of the whole body of the People ; a general suffrage of votes, and annual Parliaments. I remember the Society for Constitutional Information admitted to us that Mr — — — used to write to them in the name of the Revolution Society : If you approve of that appellation, pray be so kind as to give us a full and satisfactory answer. I shall say no more at present, but remain a friend to

Peace,

Peace, not anarchy; a well winner to the Rights of Man,
when obtained by consent; and your most obedient, &c.

*Copy of a Letter from Manchester, to the Secretary of the Society
for Constitutional Information.*

Sir, Manchester, November 13th 1792.

The Manchester Reformation Society, being convinced that the cause of Freedom will be much promoted by opening a correspondence with the different Patriotic Societies in this kingdom, have therefore thought it necessary to address your Society for this purpose.

The cause of Liberty goes on rapidly in this town; our Society meets weekly, and we admit several new members every time. We should have been more numerous had not the influence of the Aristocrats heated us out of the public halls, where we met; but we hope this step will be no ways detrimental in the end, for we presently called our members, and took a private house to meet in, where we have met sometimes past: We are just going to publish a fresh declaration, and we have not the least doubt but when it appears it will be the means of increasing our Society prodigiously.

We shall deem it as a great favour if you would send us any information that you may think worth communication; and may rest assured that we shall always be proud of any opportunity by which it may be in our power to return the favour.

(Signed) _____

Secretary to the Reformation Society;

Please to direct to Mr Goble, No. 7. Great Newton Street,
near New Cross, Manchester.

*Copy of a Letter from Leicester, to the Secretary of the Society
for Constitutional Information.*

Sir,

I sent a letter per Mail, as a parcel, requesting you to send me every particular requisite to enable us to establish a Constitutional

Constitutional Society at Leicester, similar to yours, and their at Manchester, Stockport, &c.

Send me, if you please, all that is necessary by *fast Mail*: We want Laws, Orders, Principles, Creeds, Addresses, Declarations, Resolutions, &c.

I am, Sir,

(in great haste)

Your humble servant,

Leicester,

Nov. 14th 1791.

Copy of a Letter from Coventry, to the Secretary of the Society for Constitutional Information.

Sir;

At a meeting, which was last week convened for the purpose of instituting a Society for Constitutional Information, it was determined by the persons present to form themselves into a Society for that purpose: As it was thought expedient that a plan should be adopted, which would be calculated to produce the object of the institution, the Society resolved that they would apply to the Constitutional Society in London; and at their request I have now taken the liberty of soliciting you would be so kind as to transmit to us a copy of the plan of the Sheffield or any other Society, which you may think best adapted to produce the end of the institution: Your compliance with the request will not only be a sanction to the institution, but will be attended with the salutary effect which results from such institutions.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

P. S. Our Corporation has been apprised of our intention of forming a Constitutional Society; and have threatened us with a prosecution; but we are determined to persevere in our intention.

Coventry,

Nov. 16th 1791.

The inclosed hand bill, which we privately circulated here *some time since*, has so exasperated our Corporation, that they now declare they will punish us with that rigour and severity which the Proclamation has empowered them with.

Copy of a Letter from the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society, to the Secretary of the Society for Constitutional Information.

Sir,

London, 30th November 1792.

I am directed by the Committee of Delegates of the London Corresponding Society, to send your Society the inclosed copy of an Address they are forthwith going to publish, as an answer to the seditious Address lately sent forth from the association for the preservation of property, &c. from the friends of Lovell and Republicans.

I am,

With great esteem,

Dear Sir,

Your very humble servant,

—————, Secretary.

Address of the London Corresponding Society, to the other Societies in Great Britain, united for the obtaining a Reform in Parliament.

Friends, and fellow Countrymen,

Unless we are greatly deceived, the time is approaching when the object for which we struggle is likely to come within our reach. That a nation like Britain should be free, it is required only that Britons should will it to become so—that such should be their will, the shades of our original Constitution, and the alarms of our Aristocratic enemies, sufficiently witness. Confident in the purity of our motives, and in the justice of our cause, let us meet falsehood with proofs, and hypocrisy with plainness; let us persevere in declaring our principles, and misrepresentation will meet its due reward—*et cetera*.

In this view the artificers of a late Aristocratic association, formed

formed on the 10th instant, call for a few remarks, in answer of the declaration they have published relative to other clubs and societies formed in this nation. It is true that this Meeting of Gentlemen (for so they style themselves) have mentioned no names, influenced no facts, quoted no authorities; but they take upon themselves to assert, that bodies of their countrymen have been associated, professing opinions favourable to the RIGHTS OF MAN, to LIBERTY and EQUALITY; and moreover, that those opinions are conveyed in the words, NO KING, NO PARLIAMENT.—So much for their assertions.

If this be intended to include the Societies to which we respectively belong, we here, in the most solemn manner, deny the latter part of the charge, while, in admitting the former, we claim the privilege, and glory in the character of Britons. Whoever shall attribute to us the expressions of NO KING, NO PARLIAMENT, or any design of invading the property of other men, is guilty of a wilful, an impudent, and a malicious falsehood.

We know and are sensible that the wages of every man are his-right; that difference of strength, of talents, and of industry, do and ought to afford proportional distinctions of property, which, when acquired, and confirmed by the laws, is sacred and inviolable. We defy the most selfish and malignant man in the meeting of the 10th instant to bring the remotest proof to the contrary. If there be no proof, we call upon them to justify an infamous calumny, which seems invented only to terrify independent Britons from retaining the rightful Constitution of their country. We admit, and we declare, that we are friends to CIVIL LIBERTY, and therefore to NATURAL EQUALITY, both of which we consider as the RIGHTS OF MANKIND. Could we believe them to be "in direct opposition to the laws of this land," we should blush to find ourselves among the number of its inhabitants. But we are persuaded that the shades of the Constitution will never pass current for its true principles; since we are told in its first Charter, that ALL ARE EQUAL IN THE RIGHT OF THE LAW, which "shall neither be sold, nor

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"refused,

"refused, not delayed to any free man whatsoever." Should it ever happen, that "right and justice" are opposed by force, by refusal, or by delay, then is this principle of equality violated, and we are no longer free men.

Such are our notions of those rights which it is boldly maintained "are inconsistent with the well-being of Society;" But let us not suffer men who avow no principles of liberty, whose favourite cry is inequality of property, to estrange others of our countrymen from aiding us in serving the Community, and from recovering to the nation that share of its sovereignty which has unhappily been sacrificed to corrupt Courtiers and intriguing Boroughmongers.

If our laws and constitution be just and wise in their origin and their principle, every deviation from them, as first established, must be injurious to the people whose persons and property were then secured; if at the Revolution this country was adequately represented, it is now so no longer, and therefore calls aloud for Reform.

If it be true that the people of Britain are superior to other nations, is it that our taxes are less burdensome? or that our provisions are less expensive? Is it from the various productions of our soil that we are rich? Is it owing to the majority of our numbers that we are strong?—Certainly not. France has the advantage in all these respects, and up to this period she has never been our superior in wealth, in power, in talents, or in virtue. But let us not deceive ourselves, the difference between us and that nation was formerly that our Monarchy was limited, while theirs was absolute—that the number of our Aristocracy did not equal the thousandth part of theirs—that we had trial by jury, while they had none—that our persons were protected by the laws, while their lives were at the mercy of every titled individual. We, therefore, had that to fight for which to them was unknown—since we were men while they were slaves.

The scene has indeed changed—Like our brave ancestors of the last century, they have driven out the family that would have destroyed them, they have lessened the mercenaries who loved their freedom, and have "broken their chains on the heads

" of

of their oppressors." If, during this conflict with military despots and domestic traitors, cruelty and outrage have arisen among a few inhabitants of the capital, let us lament these effects of a bloody and tyrannous Manifesto, but let us leave to the hypocrite pretenders to humanity the task of blackening the misfortune, and attributing to a whole nation the act of an enraged populace.

As we have never yet been cast so low at the foot of despotism, so it is not requisite that we should appeal to the same awful tribunal with our brethren on the continent. May our crimes be written in sand, but may our rights be engraven on marble! We desire to overturn no property but that which has been raised on the ruins of our liberty. We look with reverence on the landed and commercial interests of our country; but we view with abhorrence that monopoly of Burgage taxes, unwarranted by law or reason in this or any other nation in Europe.

Let us then continue, with patience and firmness, in the path which is begun. Let us wait and watch the *evils* of Parliament, from whom we have much to hope, and little to fear. The House of Commons may have lost the power of our saluicy, it may prove that of our deliverance. Should it not, we trust we shall not prove unworthy of our forefathers, whose sacrifices in the cause of mankind so well deserve our imitation.

(Signed) MAURICE MARGAROT, Chairman.

London,

Secretary.

25th Nov. 1793.

Appendix

Appendix E.

Copy of a Letter from the Constitutional Society at Sheffield, to the Secretary of the Society for Constitutional Information.

Sheffield Society for Constitutional Information.

Committee Room, January 16th 1793.

" Resolved,

" That a circular letter be immediately forwarded by this Committee to every Society in Great Britain (that is known to us) which has associated for the purpose of obtaining a Reform in Parliament, requesting each Society to inform us in what manner they mean to come forward in support of their several declarations during the present Session of Parliament."

Sir,

In consequence of the above resolution, we take the liberty of addressing your Society, and of informing you, that it is the opinion of this Committee, that the sentiments and determination of every Society in Great Britain ought to be explicitly known, and candidly declared, in order that such of them as coincide in idea on this great Constitutional question may sit in concert together; a circumstance which will greatly add to their strength and consequence, and which indeed appears to be indispensably requisite to be done without further delay.

We therefore beg leave to state, that in our opinion any Reform will prove nugatory, or at least fall far short of the permanent and important advantages to the country and Constitution which we have in view, that does not consist of a restoration of the right of Universal Suffrage (except of persons not of sane mind, under the age of twenty-one years, and those incapacitated by crimes) together with Annual Elections; and for the purpose of regaining these rights, we propose to petition

tion the Commons House of Parliament this Session, to take into their most serious consideration *the present very inadequate state of the Representation of the People of Great Britain*, the various and great abuses resulting therefrom, and that they will take such speedy and effectual measures to remove those evils, and remedy the grievances consequent thereon, as to their wisdom shall seem most proper.

As the importance and magnitude of the question requires that no time should be lost which can possibly be avoided, we beg that your Society will have the goodness to inform us how far our proposed plan meets with your approbation, or in what respect, and to what degree or extent, we differ.

At all events, it appears highly necessary that the several Societies in the kingdom should request to know immediately what are the express views and plans of "The Society of the Friends of the People," in order that they may be enabled to judge how far they shall be warranted in seconding and supporting the bill which Mr Grey has given notice he means to introduce into the House of Commons, in the course of the present Session, for the purpose of obtaining this great and desirable object.

Requesting an answer as speedily as possible—we remain, with the greatest respect, in the name, and by order of the Committee,

S I R,

Your most obedient servants,

— — — — —, President.

— — — — —, Secretary.

Copy of a Letter from the Society for Constitutional Information at Birmingham, to the Society for Constitutional Information in London.

Birmingham, February 6th, 1793.

Friends, and Fellow Citizens,

The members of the Society for Constitutional Information, established at this place, November 10th 1792, take this opportunity of laying before you our printed Address and Declaration,

Sanction, and our Rules and Orders, which we have adopted from the Sheffield Society, for our internal government; and to show our justice, our moderation, and love to all mankind, we desire your advice and assistance, that the general mind of our Society may be formed unanimously to the best and most bloody mode of obtaining our long-lost rights as men free born, and as citizens by universal incorporation.

The interested and bigotted supporters of the exploded system of corruption are continually throwing obstacles in the way of all Reform, and threaten us with rigorous prosecutions, and exhibit all the engines of power and tyranny before us, for attempting to inviolate the laws of our country, and endeavouring to obtain, in a legal and peaceable manner, the birthright of every Briton, (*viz.*) an equal Representation of the People in Parliament, notwithstanding which, numbers daily flock to the standard of liberty. We are determined, in spite of all base opposition, to persevere, as we have begun, in the good cause, till we have obtained the desirable end, a redress of our grievances.

We sincerely think the cause is of God, and that it would go on without our interference; but who can stand by an idle spectator, and see our fellow-men struggling for us in the cause of liberty, and not have a wish to lend a helping hand in the humane and pious work?

We ardently and sincerely desire to become instrumental in so good and great a work, the cause of liberty and of all mankind, both present and future.

The grateful thanks of our Society are given to Mr Horne Tooke, Major Cartwright, Mr Burke, and the rest of the members of the Constitutional Society for Information in London, for their firm and steady support and perseverance in our common cause of liberty and good will to all mankind, and their steady purpose to obtain an effectual Reform in the Legislative House of the People, the Commons House of Parliament.

Our Society requests the favour of your admitting the following twelve persons, whose names are subscribed, to be enrolled members of your Society, for the purpose of corresponding with yours and every other similar institution in the nation,

that for the better regulating our measures, and receiving instruction.

Wishing you all the success your laudable undertaking deserves—we are, with sincerity, your Fellow Citizens and Friends.

[The names of the twelve persons mentioned above, and of the persons to direct to, are subjoined.]

Draft of a Letter from Mr. Margaret, to the Constitutional Society at Sheffield.

13th February 1793.

Gentlemen,

The London Corresponding Society defer answering your kind letter, until they shall have been able to ascertain the sense of the whole Society on the matter. They mean likewise to render thereon with all the other Societies in London; and also, if possible, to collect the ideas of the unaffiliated, on an object so important to us all. I am,

Gentlemen,

with esteem,

your fellow labourer, &c.

Copy of a Letter from the Committee of the Friends of the People, to the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society,

Frick Street, February 15th 1793.

Sir,

I am directed by the Society of the Friends of the People, to acknowledge the receipt of your Letter, dated 1st February 1793. Having pledged ourselves, by our public acts and documents, to use every effort in our power for the purpose of obtaining a complete, substantial, and radical Reform of the Representation of the People in Parliament, we never can be supposed to have surrendered to any other body of men the exercise of our own discretion, with respect both to the plan which we deem most effectual for the purpose, and the time which we may think most favourable for offering it to the

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public;

public; at present we think, that to make public our views on these subjects would be to furnish arms to our enemies, and to injure the cause in which we are engaged. The period, however, is probably not very far distant when these particulars will be made known to the public; it is sufficient now to express our confidence that that moment will prove, by evidence more substantial than professions, that we will propose no plan of Reform, which is short of an effectual destruction of *Abuse* in the Representation of the People, and that we have bodily exerted every faculty we possess in drawing the time most favourable to the success of our plan.

We have learned, with affliction and indignation, the arbitrary and unconditional interruption of meetings of Chinese, peaceably and lawfully assembled, for the discussion and maintenance of their rights. We have ever viewed with utter disapprobation, both of their principles and proceedings, the associations who have been the authors or instruments of this persecution. Their principles, we think, are repugnant to the free spirit of the English law; and their conduct, we think, has been as injurious and oppressive as the principle of their indication is unconstitutional and absurd. But, deeply penetrated as we are with these sentiments, we neither possessed power nor legal competence to interpose for the protection of an individual, suffering even under the most unjust prosecution. We cannot, therefore, feel ourselves blameable for inaction in cases of which the particulars were never laid before us, and in which it might have been perhaps impossible, but perhaps improper, for us to have interfered.

We do not think it necessary to make any particular remarks on these publications which you have put forth. We are not called upon to pronounce any judgment on the publications of individuals or societies; and however we may lament the grievance of which some of your publications complain, our efforts must necessarily be limited to the object of an indication, the erection of an organ to speak the public voice in Legislation.

We cannot help expressing some surprise at the information that Societies in different parts of the Kingdom, who were solicitous about the nature and extent of our plans of Reform,

insisted

instead of expressing such solicitude to ourselves, should have chosen the indirect and circuitous channel of any other Society. Had they applied to the Friends of the People directly, they would assuredly have received every information compatible with the prudence, and with a due regard to the feelings of our common cause.

On the subject of your correspondence with the National Convention of France, we freely communicated to you an opinion in our last letter. We see no reason to change the sentiments which we then expressed on the prudence and tendency of that measure; for though we not only "acknowledge," but avow with pride, "that to wish success to the "cause of Freedom is congenial to the heart of a Briton," yet we cannot think that men engaged in so momentous a cause as that of Parliamentary Reform are entitled to make public declarations, even of their most virtuous sentiments, in any manner which may injure that cause, serve the purposes, and strengthen the pretence of its enemies. Far be it from us to treat with severity and rigour even those errors and indiscretions into which men may be betrayed by a generous zeal for the cause of Freedom; but surely it cannot be denied, that the correspondence of Societies in this country with public bodies in France, has furnished the most specious pretences to interested men, for confounding a virtuous sensibility to the interests of liberty in other countries, with a criminal intention to introduce disorder and civil contention into our own; it is chiefly by the help of this potent and designing man, have so successfully practised on the shams of the public, and that timid honesty has been rendered the dupe and the instrument of corruption. But on this subject all further remark is now become unnecessary, as every good citizen must now feel himself precluded from all political intercourse with France (for a period which we earnestly pray may be very short) by a war, the principle of which we utterly disapprove; the inevitable evils of which we deeply deplore; and at the possible consequences of which we tremble.

Among the most wise and honest Friends of Liberty there must arise frequent differences of opinion and of conduct; and these differences, the natural effect of an independent judge-

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ment and an independent spirit, are perfectly compatible with mutual confidence and co-operation. When, indeed, designing persons avail themselves of such differences to sow distrust, and to inculcate suspicions against the characters and intentions of men, it is then only that they become pernicious and injurious. Against practices which might produce such a spirit of dissension and distrust it is scarcely almost unnecessary to warn the Friends of Liberty, at a moment when our enemies are so formidable and so united. They have sacrificed all inferior interests and all former differences to their common interest in perpetrating abuses and corruptions. Let it not be said, that more generous motives have a less powerful influence on the human mind, and that the love of liberty is not able to produce that union among her friends, which in her enemies has arisen from the most abject and ferocious passions.

It seems scarce necessary to represent to the London Corresponding Society, the peculiar necessity of circumspection and moderation, at a moment when the most venial indiscretion of the Friends of Reform is remarked with such malignant watchfulness, and converted into an argument against the cause of Reform itself.

He must surely either be a secret enemy, or an unsafe and pernicious friend of that cause, who could prompt you to any thing that could be construed into indolence, or who would labour to sow distrust among the small number of those who now appear in behalf of freedom in England, at a period when a persecution is carried on against the Friends of Reform at home, and a war is commenced, which in its progress may combine the arms of England with those of powers engaged in a crusade against the general Liberties of Europe.

In haste and by order of the Committee.

Draft

Draft of a Letter from the London Corresponding Society, intended as an answer to the foregoing Letter.

Sir,

The Committee of the London Corresponding Society have, at present, to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 15th of February.

With pleasure we perceive your Society not unwilling to keep up a correspondence with us, yet, at the same time, we are sorry that you should appear to be hurt by the plain questions we put to you in our last—to ask of you what measures you mean to pursue is a matter which concerns us all, is certainly no ways calling upon you to surrender up to our Society, or even to the public at large, your discretion—nor can we conceive that a body of men having pledged themselves to the public, can be a sufficient security to that public to repose implicit confidence in them, without being made further acquainted with the nature and extent of the plan you mean to pursue, in order that we, the people, may, if we approve it, co-operate with you—The extent of your proposed Reform, we apprehend, is already determined upon, and we can discover no advantage likely to result from its secrecy—on the contrary, if we are to ask for ourselves the same thing which our friends mean to ask for us, the latter must receive their instructions from us, or we must be directed by them—in either case there must be no secrets. We further conceive, that the permanency of a Reform must be founded on the acquiescence of the public, who, after maturely deliberating on every thing proposed, shall have found your plan the most useful and the best that could possibly be laid down.—The business we are engaged in is of too important a nature to admit of reserve or disguise.—We will therefore, by the frankness of our behaviour, show ourselves worthy the friendship of a Society of honest men endeavouring to serve their country, and plainly tell you, our country correspondents did not desire us to inquire of you what you meant to do, but fairly asked us whether we thought you honest? whether we thought you meant to serve a party or the nation? whether we imagined you

you intended a partial or a complete Reform? Addressed in this manner to us, and blunt as those questions may appear, they have nothing in them which can possibly offend you, the people having always an undoubted right to scrutinise the character and principles of them who call themselves their Friends, and as such show an intention of 'bringing forward measures in which we are all so deeply interested.—As to the furnishing our enemies with arms by a disclosure of our intention, we cannot conceive that demands founded on Constitutional rights can lose any of their force by being made public. Reason, (*viros acquirit eundo*) to triumph requires only to be known; and as some of the people's demands are founded on fallacy, to take the enemy by surprise would be unworthy of the public champions, and, moreover, perfectly needless, when truth and reason must unavoidably bear down all before them without the assistance of guile.

Under the idea that where you say, "You neither possessed power nor legal competence to interfere for the protection of an individual, suffering under the most unjust prosecution," you allude to the case of our bill sticker: We must beg to set you right, and to inform you we never, as a Society, sought the interference of any body of men; on the contrary, we are firmly persuaded, however hard such cases may bear upon individuals, they will eventually prove of service to the public, nothing having a greater tendency towards rousing the country from its too prevalent apathy with regard to stretch of prerogative and abuse of power.

As to our Address to the French National Convention, we imagine it best to say no more about it at present, only that if it has furnished pretexts to designing men, it has only saved them the trouble of seeking excuses elsewhere; but such men, even without our aid, would have been at no loss; at the same time, we are apt to believe the plan for war, if conceived by, and then, was by no means accelerated thereby—intended as preventative, Addresses might have been effected if they had been more generally adopted; the only fault therein, that, by a mistaken idea, the Addressers gave credit to the nation for a greater degree of energy than it really possessed. We agree with you that unity of sentiment was no way incompat-

possible with diversity of opinion, and that the latter is natural to independent minds; with the same object in view, their mode of pursuing it will undoubtedly differ:—with caution, therefore, we will watch over those who wish to sow the seeds of unnecessary distrust among us, and will, at the same time, take good care that the doctrine of implicit confidence may not gain ground among us. Full as much as you wish we plead the necessity of union among the Friends of Liberty, but lament that it is prevented, or at least retarded, in many instances, by the same thing that promotes it among the enemies of Reform, namely, interest; with them all their interest is for the continuation of abuses, while to some of us a Reform must be attended with pecuniary loss, and many others would lose their employ, their daily bread, were it known they took an active part:—Thus the same motive, affecting on one side the appearance of a virtue, gives emulation to bad men; and on the other, in its vilest but most natural form, stays the progress of those who, with the best intentions, labour to free their country.

We thank you for your kind and prudent advice, exhorting us moderation and discretion at this critical moment, when every impudence in the advocate is liable to be rendered prejudicial to the cause itself.

Draft of a Letter from the London Corresponding Society, to the Constitutional Society at Sheffield.

4th March 1793.

The London Corresponding Society have at present no acknowledgment to send, and so answer more fully your preceding letter.

With regard to petitioning Parliament, we are unanimous in the opinion, that such a petition will not produce a Reform; yet, from many considerations, we are now persuaded, that if every Society in the island will send forward a petition, we shall ultimately gain ground, far as much as it will force the present members of the House to repeatedly discuss the subject, and their deliberations,

deliberations, printed in the different news-papers, will itself naturally awaken the public mind towards the object of our pursuit; the nation, once informed that a Reform in Parliament is sought for from different quarters, gives rise to debates in the House of Commons, and is acknowledged by every rank to be wanting, will begin to exercise their own reason on the subject; arrived at that period, *our purpose* *our business* *will be nearly accomplished.*

Let us closely follow up our Nottingham brethren; let every Society petition separately; let every week furnish a fresh petition, and afford a fresh debate;—we seek to open the eyes of the public; petitions on our part, and rejections on the part of the Ministry, will effectually do it. We therefore highly approve of your idea, and will ourselves follow it up, and recommend it to all the other Societies we correspond with; and whilst, we recommend to you that no time be lost in so doing.

With you we lament the evils of an imprudent and inconsistent war, a war rather eagerly sought for the advancement of private ends, than carefully depressed from consideration of public good—a contest unfavourable to this country, whether either France or despotism gain the upper hand. We join with you in gratitude to those worthy members of either House who have endeavoured to avert this national calamity, to whom we have likewise returned our public thanks—and we remain with fidelity and affection,

Your friends and fellow labourers,

Copy of a Letter from the United Societies at Norwich, to the Society for Constitutional Information.

United Political Societies of Norwich, 5th March 1793.

Gentlemen,

It is with peculiar satisfaction we are favoured with your correspondence, not merely because you are so, although you are better fitted to diffuse knowledge, but because you are embarked in

in the same magnanimous scale, which demands with alacrity the atonement of every individual, and it is with the utmost regret we see so many, either from ignorance or something worse, who are inimical to their own interest, for nothing contributes so much to support the oppressor as the ignorance of the oppressed, for which purpose the flood-gates have been opened gradually, till by degrees the streams of corruption have nearly overflowed the land, such as bribery acts, borrowing qualification and septennial acts, besides standing armies, excise and tything laws, with various others too painful for recitation, without credit to the framers thereof, and without advantage to society. We do not presume to recapitulate these abuses for your information; but being experimentally acquainted with them, we wish to find out a method of redress. At present we see a great propriety in *Universal Suffrage and Annual Elections*, but we beg you will be obliging enough to inform us of what you have collected of the minds of the People by your correspondents.—We have to inform you, that our worthy Corresponding Societies of London have recently submitted three Propositions for our investigation: First, *Whether a Petition to Parliament, or an Address to the King, or a Convention.*

Permit us briefly to state our views for your revivid; and with respect to the first, we behold we are a conquered people; we have tamely submitted to the galling yoke, and resistance in the present circumstances is vain; we cannot, we cannot all the men, and as necessity have no law, we think ourselves under that degrading necessity to state our grievances to the House of Commons, with a request for redress; and should they refuse to grant our reasonable petition, we have still got (so thanks to them) a formidable engine, that will convey the insult to the remotest parts of the kingdom. As to the propriety of the second, we wish to submit to your superior judgment, and should esteem it a favour to be informed of the result, for at present we are dubious of its good consequences. Lastly, A Convention, and oh! that the period were arrived; but in the present state of affairs, alas! it is impracticable; yet this is the object we pursue, and esteem any other means only as subordinate

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ation is, and as having a tendency to accomplish that desirable end.

We wish to be in union with our brethren and fellow labourers, and should be glad of any information as soon as it is convenient, and we beg your advice whether it is necessary, as soon as possible to collect signatures to a petition for a real Representation of the People, and by whom to present it; whether Mr Coke, Mr Burch, or any of the Friends of the People; and whether it is attended with any expense.—Our members are deeply interested to the business.

We can give you no accurate statement of the Representation in our neighbourhood, only observe it is equally neglected here as elsewhere. To conclude with for all favours received, wishing your and success, and may Heaven direct

We subscribe ourselves, Gentlemen,

your

obedient servant,

Obliged humble servant,

(Signed) —————

Note. Please to direct to ——— St Mary's Church, Mr ——— being no longer our Secretary.—We have between 30 and 40 separate Societies in Norwich, besides many in the country villages.—

Copy of a Letter from the Secretary of the Society for Constitutional Information at Birmingham, to the Secretary of the Society for Constitutional Information at London.

Birmingham, March 15th 1793.

Sir,

At the request of the Society for Constitutional Information, I hereby acknowledge the receipt of your letter, whereby it appears that your Society have acceded to our request, by desiring the persons (whose names you were furnished with) as associated members in your Society, for which we beg you to accept our united thanks, and best wishes that your Society may go on to accumulate a mass of true Patriots, whose

whole principles may not be subverted by interest, or conquered by fear.

This Society offers with gratitude their thanks and commendations to ————, Esq. for the prompt accompanying your letter, but more particularly for his zeal in the cause of Freedom, which cannot be promoted but by the free use of the press, which we trust will never be restrained from Britain. Another letter accompanies this, containing a few particulars, which we doubt not you will peruse with pleasure. Will write you further on that subject shortly.

I am, &c.

—————, Sec.

Copy of a Letter from the Secretary to the Constitutional Society at Sheffield, to the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society.

Sheffield, Committee Room of the Constitutional Society,
April 17th 1793.

Sir,

I am directed by the Committee to inclose you a printed copy of the Petition agreed on by the inhabitants here, to be presented to the House of Commons, for a Reform in Parliament, and the Address accompanying the same. Upwards of five thousand signatures are already affixed to it, and we have no doubt there will be at least as many more.

I am, with great respect,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

—————,
Secretary to the Constitutional Society.

To the Secretary of the Corresponding Society, London.

P. S. Having no direction to the Constitutional Whigs, Independents, and Friends of the People, and being desired by

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them

them " to convey future favours through the same channel as " the last " which was by your means, beg you will send the other letter, which comes directed to you by same post, to Mr ———, Secretary of said Society.

Copy of a Letter from the Secretary of the Society for Constitutional Information, to the Secretary of the United Political Society at Norwich.

15th April 1791.

Sir,

We have to acknowledge, with great satisfaction, the letter which you favoured us with, dated the 5th instant, relative to the most desirable of all other objects, the Reform of a Parliamentary Representation. The honour you do us, in supposing that we are better fitted than yourselves for the promotion of political knowledge we must disclaim, because we observe with the greatest pleasure, that our country correspondents have too much zeal and information to want success in their public endeavours, whether at Norwich, at Sheffield, at Manchester, or elsewhere throughout the nation. In our anxiety for the good of our country, we trust that we are all equal, and as such we doubt not of our ultimate success.

We see, with sorrow, the existence of those evils which you so justly reprobate as the streams of corruption, overflowing this once free and prosperous country. We see, with surprise and abhorrence, that men are to be found both able and willing to support these corruptions. It is however no small consolation to find that others are not wanting, in every part of the nation, of an opposite character, who are ready to remedy, by all laudable and honourable means, the defects in our Representation, the usurped extension of the duration of Parliaments, and other grievances, such as you notice in your letter.

That the Constitution of England has no more of that character it once possessed; that the supposed Democracy of the country has become a matter of property and privilege; and that

that we have therefore no longer that mixed Government which our adversaries are praising, when they know it is no longer in our possession, are facts notorious and indisputable. Where then are we to look for the remedy? To that Parliament of which we complain, to the Executive Power which is implicitly obeyed, if not anticipated, in that Parliament; or to ourselves, represented in some meeting of Delegates for the extensive purpose of Reform, which we suppose you understand by the term Convention.

It is the end of each of these Propositions that we ought to look to; and as success in a good cause must be the effect of perseverance, and the rising season of the time, let us determine with coolness, but let us persevere with decision. As to a Convention, we regard it as a plan the most desirable and most practicable, so far as the great body of the people shall be courageous and virtuous enough to join us in the attempt.

Hitherto we have no reason to believe that the moment is arrived for that purpose.—As to any petition to the crown, we believe it hopeless in its consequences.—With respect to the last of your proposals, we are at a loss to advise. If the event is looked to in the vote which may be obtained from that body to whom this petition is to be addressed, which of us can look to it without the prospect of an absolute negative? In this point of view therefore it cannot require a moment's consideration. But if we regard the policy of such a petition, it may, in our apprehension, be well worth considering as a warning voice to our present Legislators, and as a signal for imitation to the majority of the People. Should such a plan be vigorously and generally pursued, it would hold out a certainty to our fellow countrymen that we are not a handful of individuals unworthy of attention or consideration, who desire the relaxation of the ancient Liberties of England; but, on the contrary, it might bring into light that host of well-meaning men, who, in the different towns and counties of this realm, are silently but seriously anxious for Reformation in the Government.

We exhort you, with anxiety, to pursue your laudable endeavours

desire for the common good, and never to despair of the public cause.

We are, &c.

Signed by Order, in the name of the
Society for Constitutional Information.

—————, Secretary.

Copy of a printed Letter from the Constitutional Society at Sheffield, to the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society.

Committee Room of the Constitutional Society, Sheffield,
April 14th, 1793.

Sir,

I am directed by the Committee of this Society to transmit you the annexed Resolutions, and to ask the opinion of your Society whether it may not be expedient for all the Societies in Great Britain to adopt similar resolutions, and to fix on a stated time to follow them up with petitions or remonstrances, or both, against the present impolitic and ruinous war.—We think a measure of this kind, coming from so many quarters of the kingdom at the same time, would not fail of having great weight; and the present lamentable state of the country demands that something effectual should be adopted towards its relief.

Requesting as speedy an answer as possible, I remain, with the greatest respect, Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

—————, Secretary.

P E A C E.

At a General Meeting of the Constitutional Society of Sheffield, held on Friday the 14th of April 1793.

————— in the chair.

Resolved, That Peace is the blessing, and War the curse and scourge of nations; and that the present war is destructive

destructive of the happiness, commerce, and liberties of this country; that our manufacturers and merchants already deplore its wretched effects; and that nothing short of an immediate Peace can save this country from ruin.

Resolved, That as the motives alledged by the *Executive MAGISTRATE* for continuing war against the Republic of France no longer exist, we deem it improper that a *defensive* should be converted into an *offensive* war, and must eventually exhaust the resources, and spill the blood of our countrymen.

Resolved, That no provocatives or manifestoes of the French warrant us, during this unexampled crisis of public and domestic dangers, in the prosecution of an offensive war, which is now becoming, we dread, the war of Kings, and not of their subjects.

Resolved, That notwithstanding any previous insults we may have offered to the Republic of France, it does not behove the character of a generous Government to pursue with vengeance those they hate and have injured.

Resolved, That as our Ally is by public authority declared to be no longer in danger, as her towns are repaired and garrisoned; and as the re-conquest of Belgic provinces form a potent barrier to any poster projects of invasion on the part of the French, it is our opinion that the British troops ought to be recalled.

Resolved, That as an alliance with the kingdom of France was considered by William Pitt as of the greatest importance to the commerce and happiness of this country, it is the opinion of this Society that it ought to be renewed with the Republic of France, more especially to prevent the ambitious views of those confederate Despots who, at Pillnitz and Paris, agree to share the remnant of Poland, the Spoil of France, and of European Turkey.

—————, Chairman.

—————, Secretary.

Copy

Copy of a Letter from the Secretary of the Constitutional Society at Sheffield, to the Secretary of the Corresponding Society in London.

Sheffield, Committee Room of the Constitutional Society, May 14 1793.

Sir,

I am directed by the Committee to acknowledge the receipt of your kind favour, and to thank you for the same. You will see by this, copies of the petitions which we sent you, that we have taken the step you so warmly recommend, and which indeed you might well suppose, after our circular letter on the subject, we ought not to omit doing. We did it as the act not of the Society alone, but of the whole town and neighbourhood. There were nearly ten thousand signatures to it.

We have sent you herewith several copies of the resolutions we have entered into against the war, which we beg you will distribute in such manner as you shall think best for the purpose intended, and let us know, as soon as possible, how you approve them.

The direction you sent before is as good as one as you can have, to Mr ———, at ———, Sheffield. By order, and in the name of the Committee, I am, Sir,

Your very humble servant,

Secretary to the Constitutional Society.

Draft of a Letter from the London Corresponding Society to the Secretary of the Friends of the People at Edinburgh.

London, May 17th 1793.

Sir,

The London Corresponding Society eagerly seize the opportunity of Mr ——— going back to Edinburgh, to request of your Society a renewal of correspondence, and a more intimate co-operation in that which both Societies alike seek, viz. a Reform in the Parliamentary Representation. We are very
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feasible that no Society can by itself bring about that desirable end; let us therefore unite as much as possible, not only with each other but with every other Society throughout the nation. Our Petitions, you will have learned, have been all of them unsuccessful; our situation *must* now therefore be turned to *find* more effectual means.—From your Society we would willingly learn them, and you, on your part, may depend upon our adopting the firmest measures, provided they are Constitutional, and we hope the country will not be behindhand with us.

This war has already opened the eyes of many, and should it continue much longer, there is no answering for its effects on the mind of the people.

Our Society has met with much persecution, nevertheless we go on increasing in number and political knowledge. Wishing you and our cause all success, we remain most cordially, Sir,

For the London Corresponding Society,

Your friends and fellow labourers

—————, Chairman.

—————, Secretary.

To the Friends of the People at Edinburgh.

Copy of a Letter from the Secretary of the Friends of the People at Edinburgh to the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society.

Mr ——— did me the pleasure to call on Thursday afternoon, and delivered your letter of the 17th current. I am much pleased with the contents of it, and shall lay it before the first meeting of our Societies here, which however does not take place till Monday evening. I would have acknowledged the receipt of your favour by yesterday's post, but was too much employed in removing our household to another lodging to attend to any thing else.

If either you in England or we in Scotland should attempt separately the Reform which we, I trust, seek to obtain, we should by so doing only expose our weakness, and manifest our ignorance of the corruption which appales our important undertaking

undertaking. If we sought only the extinction of one set of interested men from the management of national affairs, that place might be given to another set, without affecting the *virtue of the system adverse to Reform*. These might be easily accomplished; but to cut up deep and wide-rooted prejudices; to give effectual energy to the dictates of truth in favour of public virtue and national prosperity, in opposition to fall and all its interested habits, and to withstand and overcome the final efforts of the powers of darkness, is the work of the whole and not of a part, a work to which mankind, till this *crucial period*, were never adequate, because never till now *disposed to fraternize, not merely, or only, I trust, from the sense of the common danger to which we are exposed, but from the resulting principle of universal benevolence*.

I know no greater service that I can do to my Country than to promote the union you so wisely desire; and I am happy to assure you, that I have hitherto discovered no sentiment in our association adverse to the most intimate and brotherly union with the associations in England.

I think the minds of all men, in the nature of things, be *now turned to more effectual means of Reform*. Not one person was convinced of the necessity of it by the most convincing arguments of reason, together with the most unequivocal expressions of universal desire. What then is to be hoped for from repetition; I am only afraid, that the blow in England against Reform was so contracted that in retreating it may break. You would willingly learn, you say, from us: I own that we ought to be forward in this. We have, at once, *in great wisdom, prescribed our plan of Organization; and if we were in the same independent state of mind as the people of England*, we would be able to take the lead. The associations with you are no more I fear—*curse my freedom*—than an Aristocracy for the good of the people. They are indeed moderate, firm, and virtuous, and better exacted be; but we are the people themselves, and we are the first to shew that the people can both judge and resolve, if undirected by falling, with both wisdom and moderation.

I have not a higher wish, in the present exertions for Reform,

firm, than to *for the people unworfully and regularly affected*, because I am persuaded that the present disastrous engagements will issue in ruin, and the people *then must provide for themselves*; and it would be unhappy, when we *should be ready to all with unanimity, to be occupied about Organisation, without which however emergency must arise*. We will not need but to be prepared for the event, to "stand and for the salvation " of the Lord." Let us therefore take the hint given us by our oppressors; let us begin in *rough to make up our minds relative to the extent of Rights which we ought to seek; be prepared to justify it, and to counteract objections; let us model the whole in the public mind; let us provide every stake and flag of the tabernacle which we would erect, so that when the tabernacle of oppression is the Father of ambition are broken down, under the madness and folly of their supporters, we may then, without searching and all dangerous delay, erect at once our tabernacle of righteousness. And may the Lord himself be in it.*

How painful to the feelings of a reflecting mind to look back to the wretched state in which the Roman Monarchy, enfeebled and broken by its own corruptions, left the nations which it had subjected, like " sheep without a shepherd" they soon became a prey to every invader, because there was none to gather and unite them. Had they, foreseeing the evil, associated for mutual defense, no robber would have been able to enslave them; they would have given laws to all parties as well as to themselves; all separate colonies and nations would have sought their alliance; but not having virtue to associate, and heal the divisions, and root out the selfish spirit, which ambition fostering governments procure to their subjects, they fell under oppressions, from under whose iron scepter they have never yet been able to deliver themselves.

We may suppose an event which we deprecate; nay, should we not be prepared for every possible issue of the present unprecedented divisions of mankind, we have a right to be apprehensive of the abilities of our own managers, who are so afraid to depart from precedent, that, like men of detail, they may be inadequate to the task of preserving the vessel from

shipwreck, now grappling with danger, not only great, but new and uncommon. If the present Ministry fall, who after them shall be trusted; it requires little penetration to see the anarchy and discord which will follow; it will be such that nothing short of a general union among the people throughout the island, will be able to meet; hence, therefore, to associate, at least to be ready to associate. If then, such a broken state of things should take place, the civil boils that would necessarily refuse would soon subside before the united irresistible voice of the whole. Do not, I intreat you, hesitate, thinking such a work *plus tard est plus*; but a month, and then it may be too late. A intelligent party may be already formed, and only waiting for the leading of the present managers; it will then be too late to seek to subject to deliberation, after a party has done the act of rebellion. *If you go no farther than paper meetings in different towns, we will not be able to confide in your constancy, because, while in such place, you may be but the tools of a faction.* We could have all confidence, and unite with all affection, in one assembly of Commissioners, from all countries of the world, if we knew they were chosen by the unbiassed voice of the people, because they would come up with the same distant views and desires as ourselves having all agreed to a common centre of union and interest; but we could not confide in fellow-citizens who kept aloof from such union, and would not previously affiliate in one great and indivisible family.

In troubling you with so long an epistle I have at least shewn my inclination to correspond. I have also hinted at things which appear to me the present subjects of consideration, because I am desirous of your opinion upon them. I have possibly wrote with too much freedom, but you will place it to account of and in the cause, and on this score discharge my debt, which is disinterested and philanthropic.

With sincere esteem and affection,

I am, Sir,

Your wellwisher,

W. SKIRVING, Sec.

Copy

Copy of a Letter from the Secretary of the Constitutional Society at Leeds, to the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society.

Delegate meeting of the Constitutional Society.

Leeds, May 30th 1793.

Sir,

By request of the Sheffield Society, and having received directions from them for the purpose of corresponding with all the Societies in England and Scotland.

We the members of the Leeds Constitutional Society, in order to obtain the desired end of Parliamentary Reform, desire fraternal communication with the Corresponding Society in London.

We shall be glad of any information or instruction in your power on all occasions, and hope you will find the Leeds Society always faithful to the interests of the people, and though they are but few, not exceeding Two Hundred, they are men, and are determined to exert their utmost, in order to subvert their neighbours in their common interest.

With this we send you a copy of our Address and Declaration, and shall ever acknowledge all favours from you.

Wishing the cause of Freedom, in which we have embarked, every degree of success.

I remain, in the name and by
Order of the Society,

—————

Copy of a Letter from the Secretary of the Constitutional Society at Leeds, to the Secretary of the Society for Constitutional Information.

Delegate meeting of the Constitutional Society.

Leeds, May 15th 1793.

Sir,

By request of the Sheffield Society, that the Leeds Constitutional Society would correspond with all the Societies in

Great

Great Britain and Scotland, and receive directions from them for that purpose.

We, the members of the Leeds Constitutional Society, beg leave to address these few lines to you, hoping that your paternal affection for your fellow mortals, of whatever description, may induce you to admit to fraternization a few poor mechanics, friends of liberty, but enemies to anarchy. Aristocratic tyranny and Democratic ignorance, seem to pervade and overawe the town of Leeds to that amazing degree, that, in the general, we are beheld more like monsters than the Friends of the People, and I believe that these six months past the ignorant part of the people (through the inductions of the Aristocracy and the Priests) have expected us to fall on them and destroy them; but since the 1st of April last, the time we had the opportunity of publishing our Address and Declaration, and our steady and uniform conduct, the people begin to behold us with new eyes, and we begin to increase in our numbers, and we hope, ere long, the persons they took for their greatest enemies will be looked on as their best friends.

We have herewith sent you a copy of our Address and Declaration, and shall be glad if you think it worth your notice to correspond with a company of poor mechanics. We shall ever gratefully acknowledge all favours.

Our numbers amount to near two thousand, and we constantly keep increasing, and, in general, are very regular in their conduct; but though through predominancy of the Aristocracy they have been overawed, that they scarce dare tell their neighbours they were their friends; but I hope the clouds are dispersing, and the glorious sun of Liberty is approaching to its meridian.

I remain, in the name, and by
Order of the Society,
Sir, Yours, &c.

Secretary of the Constitutional
Society, Leeds.

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*Draft of a Letter from the London Corresponding Society, to the
Secretary of the Constitutional Society at Birmingham.*

Sir,

10th June 1793.

It is with singular satisfaction the Committee of the London Corresponding Society received your letter; they are very glad to see the spirit of Freedom springing up in Birmingham, and they make no doubt but that the zeal of your Society, and the increase of your numbers, will soon do away the stigma thrown on your town by the unjustifiable behaviour of a Church and King mob. We are entirely of your opinion with regard to the necessity of a general union; and we believe, as you do, that when once the country shall have so united, the Powers of the day will be forced to yield to the just demand of a long and sore oppressed people.

With pleasure we accept your proffered correspondence, and earnestly beg of you, to let us hear from your Society by every opportunity. We wish likewise you would point out to us *some safe mode of conveyance* for such informations and publications as we may think necessary to be transmitted to you. The post we no ways rely on, as many of our letters have already been intercepted.

If any of the members of your Society should have occasion to visit this metropolis, we hope you will not let him come without a letter from you, and that while they stay here they will frequently *assist at the meetings* of our several divisions, and by their *affirming concurrence* an union which we hope soon to see spread itself all over Britain.

We will not enter into a detail of our grievances; we are equally well informed thereof, and all alike thoroughly convinced that nothing short of Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage, can reflect to us that degree of civil liberty we are justly entitled to, &c. &c.

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To ———, Secretary to the
Birmingham Society for
Constitutional Information.

Copy

Copy of a Letter from the Political Society at Norwich, to the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society. Received 15th June 1793. Answered 15th July 1793.

The Political Society of Norwich.

Sir,

I lately received your letter from Mr ———, dated April 2nd, which, through multiplicity of business, we have omitted to answer—hope you will excuse the delay. We also received your friendly letter, prior to that, wherein you stated three propositions; First, a petition to his Majesty, or to Parliament, or a National Convention, and ordered one of our Committee to attend to it;—should be glad if you would inform us whether it was attended to;—I gave my opinion on the subject to the Constitutional Society of London, and found their ideas congenial to my own, viz. an address to the King—feble; a petition to Parliament (as a conquered people)—tolerable; a National Convention (if circumstances admitted)—best of all. To what a alarming crisis are we arrived—the justice is formed and established,—the People become a prey, and (to adopt the phrase of an Hibernian apologist) are treated as the Swiss multitude, except the privilege of betting. Wars must commence at the caprice of individuals; people torn from their houses to be butchered; windmills must be attacked at the risk of being carried over and dashed to atoms; the nation drained of its substance to support a league, &c. &c. &c. Many epithets may with great propriety be applied, excepting such as Fox, Sheridan, Grey, Erskine, Lamborne, Lauderdale, Stanhope, Palmer, Priestly, Tooke, Wharfed, Mackoch, Barlow, Mackintosh, Cooper, besides many who have suffered under the Iron Band of &c. and when the People have complained, and humbly requested a removal of abuses, they have been treated with insult. Alas! where is the majesty of the People? An indifferent observer would suppose it to centre in Stars and Garters, Ribbons and costly Apparel, Palaces, Coaches and Barges, with all the trappings of pacific amusement;—and were it not for their secured consequence, we could hear with it;—but when we consider how many sweat and toil and serve

to suspect it, how can we be persuaded but that there is a confederence between the land owners and the merchant to hold the people in vassalage; for they eat up the people as they eat bread;—the influence of the Aristocracy and Hierarchy is become very alarming, for they have absorbed and swallowed up the People; but a rumour is spread from the South, and it is terrible to tyrants,—it flings their mind,—it galls their flesh; and, like Father, are a terror to themselves lest the People should assert their rights.

Yours, &c.

Copy of a Letter from the Hertfordshire Society to the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society.

Hertford, July 31b 1793:

Sir,

Owing to some mistake in the post, your letter did not arrive till after the meeting of the Hertfordshire Society in April last had taken place, I therefore had not an opportunity of laying it before the Society till their General Meeting of Monday last. I am directed by the Society to acknowledge the receipt of your favour, and to assure you, that they shall be happy to co-operate with the London Corresponding Society for the attainment of the Common object of Parliamentary Reform, so far as the views of the two Societies are compatible; with regard to the rights of Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments, we do not pledge ourselves to demand them. Without however entering into reasoning on the subject, which would admit of much more discussion than the limits of a letter would allow, they are convinced that the common object of the two Societies is the same, and that the mode in which they both wish to obtain that object is the same also, by Constitutional means; they will therefore be happy in receiving any communication from the London Corresponding Society. Perseverance and union are the means by which Parliamentary Reform must be obtained. They shall not, they trust, be

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Signed

found deficient in the one, and are at all times disposed to estimate the other.

I have the honor to be,

Your obedient humble Servant

CONCLUSIONS

All Letters to the Society are to be addressed to _____
Hartford.

Copy of a Letter from Trenchard, to the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society.

July 6th 1903.

Follow @david

Am commended by the Society, as being Secretary, to thank you for your favour of the letter and pamphlets—they are happy to find the existence of such associations as yours, for the attainment of so laudable a purpose as that of a Parliamentary Reform, and hope to see them more general throughout the kingdom—they think it high time for the people in this country to look into things, and keep a stricter watch over their rights and liberties than they have hitherto, lest they should be undermined, especially when abuses so glaring are perpetually staring them in the face, which the most prejudiced and insensate will not long allow.

As you wished to be informed respecting our Society, I'll give you a concise view of it. We call it the Society for Political and Moral Information—we have a set of articles for the conducting of it—Monthly and Quarterly Meetings for the proposing of books, and settling the Secretary's accounts—we take in a periodical work called the Patriot, and a town and country news-paper.

We have no correspondence with any Society ; but would gladly, were it not for the prejudice that prevails, which to be sure has in some measure subsided, and the smallness of our number ; but however we shall be glad to receive a line from you when any thing particular occurs.—The burning of Thomas Paine's effigy, together with the *bloody efforts* of the present war, has done more good to the cause than the most sub-

fraternal arguments; 'tis amazing the increase of friends to liberty, and the spirit of enquiry that is gone abroad; scarcely an old woman but is talking of politics. We have made the best use of your pamphlets. The Society desire their respects and good wishes for your health, including my own, and remain,

Your fellow citizens, and
Co-operator in the glorious
Cause of Liberty,

Copy of a Letter from the Secretary of the Constitutional Society at Leeds, to the Secretary of the Society for Constitutional Information.

Sir,

I am directed by the Committee of this Society to transmit you the annexed Resolutions, and hope you will receive the same as a token of their respect, copies of which are sent to the several Societies mentioned in the Resolutions.

We have received a letter, with a petition from Glasgow to his Majesty, praying that he would take the present alarming state of the nation into his most serious consideration, and use the utmost of his endeavours to restore to us the blessings of Peace, which I believe will be followed from Leeds with a similar petition, and if followed up from all other places, perhaps might have the most salutary effect.

I am,

With the greatest respect,

In the name and by order of the Society,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

Leeds,

July 11th 1793.

Leeds Constitutional Society.

At a meeting of Delegates of the said Society, on the 15th day of June instant;

It was Resolved, That the thanks of this Society be given to Charles Grey, Esquire, and the rest of the illustrious Ministry,

pority, who supported his motion on the 6th and 7th of May last, for a Parliamentary Reform.

That the decision of the Representative body on the above motion, should only sit with the people as a cement of the bonds of fellowship and unanimity; and that this Society think it their duty, and are determined, in conjunction with all the Societies in Great Britain, to persevere until they have obtained the object of their association.

That the thanks of this Society be given to the Society of the Friends of the People, for their laborious endeavours to procure information on the subject of Parliamentary Reform, and for the publication of the same, as well as the liberal present lately received from them, and to the different Societies which have expressed their desire for affiliation with this Society, particularly those of London, Sheffield, Birmingham, and Glasgow.

That the Secretary do notify the above Resolutions to Mr Grey, and the several Societies respectively; and that these Resolutions be published in one of the Leeds and one of the London papers.

_____, President.

_____, Secretary.

Draft of a Letter from the London Corresponding Society, to the Secretary to the Political Societies at Norwich.

London, 15th July 1793.

Fellow Citizen,

The London Corresponding Society have received and read with pleasure your letter of the 15th June, but the answer which you mention to have been made to our three questions has not yet come to hand. We shall be glad to be informed in your next whether it was ever put in the Post-office.

With regard to the questions themselves, however individuals may have made up their minds on them, the public sentiment ought to approve the mode of petitioning Parliament. We accordingly acquiesced, and sent in a petition, signed by near 4000 persons. With this letter you will receive a copy of it; and with his face you are doubtless not unacquainted.

While we agree with you that the people are treated like swine, we are forced to acknowledge that some among them, from their *stupidity and ignorance*, *desperately* deserve better usage; however, *unceasingly* labouring to meliorate their condition as well as our own, and convinced that a thorough Parliamentary Reform is the only means of effectuating it, we firmly pursue our purpose, and in the most conspicuous manner, under the eye of the Court, in the middle of the Metropolis, and in the very neck of place and passion heretics, the Tavern where Reeves, the tool of the judge, holds his inquisitorial tribunal, have lately held a general meeting of the Society, sent forth an Address to the nation, and entered into some spirited Resolutions, a few copies of which we desire you to accept and promulgate as far and as wide as you can; at the same time rest assured, that the firmness displayed therein is not confined to words, but that on every occasion our Society will be found foremost in *efforting and recovering the liberties of their country*.

Exhorting you, therefore, to throw aside all unavailing complaint, we wish you to occupy yourselves in instructing the people, in introducing and maintaining order and regularity in your own Society, and in forming a junction with all others *affiliated for the same purpose throughout the series*, by keeping up a constant correspondence with them; but, above all, *ardently and courageously preparing yourself for the worst*; for as it is natural to suppose that those who now prey on the public will not willingly yield up their enjoyments, nor renounce us of our rights *without a struggle*, which, by their behaviour in Ireland, we have some reason to think they are meditating, and perhaps may intend to effect by means of those very foreign mercenaries who are now paid with the sweat of our brow, and whom, under some plausible pretence, it would be no difficult matter to land on our shore.—It may be more advantageous to humanity to show them at first, that their opponents are neither mob nor rabble, but an *indignant oppressed people*, in whom is not yet entirely extinct the *value of their forefathers*.

Union and increase being then our only resources, let us diligently exert ourselves therein with zeal and patience, deter-

ving ignorance and prejudice, with firmness and a confident behaviour encouraging those who join us; and, above all, avoiding little bickerings among ourselves, over disagreeing selfish jealousies and private animosities, and cordially joining with heart and hand in the common cause.

—Your neighbourhood must severely feel the dreadful consequences of an iniquitous, depopulating, and ruinous war, but you are not the only sufferers; from various parts of the country we learn, that the war abroad has already spread desolation at home; yet such is the blindness of some folks, that they talk of its being continued for years. Peace we wish to all men; but to such friends destruction. Let us have free you soon, and let our future correspondence be more regular. We are, with sincerity, fellow citizens, for the London Corresponding Society, as

Yours friends and fellow labourers for the
Good of our country.

*Draft of a Letter from the London Corresponding Society to
the Secretary of the Constitutional Society at Leeds.*

1000 July 1992

Follow China

The London Corresponding Society have at once to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 30th May, and to apologise for not having answered it sooner; but by accident it was for some time mislaid; and the multiplicity of business upon our hands occasioned a still further delay.

Highly approving of the directions given you by the Sheffield Society for Constitutional Information, to correspond with every Society in Great Britain, we joyfully accept your overture, and shall not in feebler fail to improve the acquaintance; at the same time, being inhabitants of the metropolis, and forming a Society which has undergone some degree of political warfare, and thereby acquired experience, we will, on occasion offer, most fraternally give you every advice and information in our power; but as you already have the afflu-

ance of the Sheffield Society, there will remain little for us to do that way.

Let not the smallness of your number deter you from actually pursuing your plan. Reason makes sure though slow progress, and having once gained a footing in the human mind can never be eradicated.

Your Address and Declaration have likewise been mislaid, and as yet we have been unable to recover them, therefore beg you will, with your next, send us another copy.

To return to ourselves, we have made a stand against the place and pension clubs; we have been abused in the Senate, calumniated in public, persecuted in private, and worried out of public houses, yet (we continue meeting numerously entire) our demands are such that no one has dared to deny their consonance with the principles of the Constitution, and our doctrine makes numerous proselytes, and greatly increases the number of those who may with truth be styled the Friends of their country in particular, and of mankind in general. We petitioned Parliament, and they were forced to admit our petition, although they would not grant what it required; in short, we strengthen so much, that on the 8th of this month we had a general meeting of the Society at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, the very place where Reeves and his accomplices met.—He met there at the same time in a room under us, and, together with his associates, swallowed a copious draught of mortification in seeing our meeting so well conducted, and so numerously attended; we say numerously, for having limited the number of admission tickets to 300, many who had been dilatory in providing themselves were unavoidably excluded.

Inclosed you have copies of our petition to Parliament, of our two first Addresses, of our correspondence with Mr Francis, of Mr Watson's motion in the house of Commons on the 31st May, and of the Address to the Nation, and the Resolutions we published at our — general meeting. You will therein discover all that we wish to obtain, and what we will fully obtain ere we cease to be a Society, earnestly pleading the attempt now making in Ireland, and about to be introduced into Great Britain. We invite you most cordially to co-operate with

us, and even if our rules and pursuits meet your entire approbation, and you have no particular attachment to the name you have adopted, it might advantage the cause were you to incorporate yourselves with us, and go under our common denomination. This however is only an idea thrown out for your consideration. You are at perfect liberty to notice it or not. We are with sincerity your fellow labourers,

Sir, &c.

*Draft of a Letter from the London Corresponding Society to
Bristol.*

London, 31st July 1793.

Sir,

Your letter of the 6th instant we have laid before the London Corresponding Society, who, sincerely anxious to promote the cause of Freedom and Humanity, by uniting and corresponding with the Friends to Reform, directed us to answer you with all convenient speed; but business multiplying fast on our hands, both from the rapid increase of our own Society, and from the vast number of country Societies weekly starting up, and who require at our hands a regular correspondence, we have been prevented from being so exact as we could wish; the latter impediment is far from insuperable, as it may fairly be attributed to the diffusion of political knowledge, causing men more seriously to reflect on the various miseries now pursued, which become more unpopular, proportionally as they become more unwise.

We receive with pleasure your assurance of co-operating with us for a Reform in Parliament, an object to which all our endeavours tend, and on which our hearts are invariably fixed; but as your declaration, that "you will not pledge yourselves to demand Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments," is followed by no specific plan of Reform of your own, we are under some difficulty how to conclude.—Perhaps, as strangers, you write to us with that prudent reserve which is sometimes necessary; and that idea receives strength from your appearing afterwards convinced that the common ob-

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ject of the two Societies is the same, which we readily admit; but as mutual confidence is the basis of union, and the only rational pledge and support for co-operative exertion, we trust your next will do away every difficulty.

With respect to Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments, a mature conviction of their justice and necessity for the preservation of Liberty and prosperity to the great body of the People, and for securing the independence of Parliament, was our primary inducement to associate. We therefore cordially assure you, that these our principles, as already presented to the public, remain immutable. Unassociated with any party whatever, we can consider no Reform radical but such as will enable every individual of the community to enjoy the advantages thereof equally with ourselves; for if ignorance of the nature of government, or the merits of the candidates, be an argument against Universal Suffrage, as our opponents pretend, the same reasons would equally incapacitate a great majority of those who now enjoy that privilege, to the exclusion of very many thousands much better informed than themselves—not to mention, that under a more equalized mode of government, the people would be at once induced and empowered to improve themselves in useful knowledge.—In a word, we know no principle, consistent with justice or reason, by which we could exclude conscientiously any part of the community from an equality of rights and privileges, which every member of Society, as he contributes to its support, ought equally to enjoy.

With respect to Annual Parliaments we will just remark, that good members may be re-elected, whilst twelve months we think fully sufficient for the welfare of millions to remain at the mercy of a bad representative.—Having thus unequivocally stated our principles, we shall conclude by observing, that the bill just passed in Ireland is of a nature to awaken the jealousy of every Friend to Freedom and Humanity, will render every exertion justifiable, should a similar attack upon Constitutional Freedom be attempted here. We shall be happy to unite in the closest bonds of union with the Hertford Society, and hope, as they have no party views, that in a very

short space of time they will think entirely as we do on the subject of Parliamentary Reform.

Yours

We are, &c. &c.

On the 3th July, we had a general meeting of the Society at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand. Reeves and his associates were at the same time in the room beneath us. We lend you a few copies of the Address that was then published.

*Draft of a Letter from the London Corresponding Society, to the
Tewkesbury Society.*

London, 3d August 1793.

Fellow Citizens,

Your Letter of the 6th July has been laid before the Committee of Delegates of the London Corresponding Society, and it is with great pleasure they see an infant Society starting up in your part of the country. Go on and prosper; no assistance shall be wanting on our part as to information, instruction, or any other thing in which we can be useful to you—we herewith lend you copies of most of our publications since we have been a Society—may they be of service!

We recommend it to you to peruse attentively our first Address, and the rules which are annexed to it; it will likewise be advisable for you to abide entirely by a thorough Parliamentary Reform, as is therein expressed, and to pay great attention to the instruction of your neighbours in their political rights, for which purpose weekly meetings, if they could conveniently take place, would prove more advantageous than your meeting only once a month; and if you thought it might facilitate your progress, the London Corresponding Society empower us to inform you, that they will willingly incorporate your Society with ours, under the title of the Corresponding Society in Tewkesbury; and if so, our rules will become yours, our intelligence will be the same, and our correspondence weekly and regularly carried on—but then our mode of proceeding must be entirely alike, and no reserve must take place

place between us.—We imagine some other Societies in other parts of the country will fall into the same plan, and it need not be pointed out to you how much more forcible such a junction would render every thing that comes from us; but before you do it you must acquaint us with your design, in order that we may give you every instruction necessary. Farewell, Fellow Citizens, and firmly rely on the assistance and sincere friendship of the London Corresponding Society in so good a cause.

Yours, sincerely,

Draft of a Letter from the London Corresponding Society apparently intended to be sent to different Societies

London, 15th August 1793.

Sir,

The London Corresponding Society, after so long an interruption in their correspondence with you, anxiously wish to revive and to render it most interesting, firmly persuaded that the connection between the different Societies in Great Britain cannot be too closely cemented—to that end they beg you will point out a safer mode of conveyance for our letters than the post, and wish you, in answer to this, to give us the fullest account of your progress, and of the state of affairs in your department. Continuing in a slow but steady pace the career which we have begun, we are nearly certain that although the number of our members do not increase so rapidly as from the population of the metropolis we might have expected, yet our principles make their way among the public, and many thousands, who, from connection, interest, &c. may be afraid or cautious of joining us openly, notwithstanding are our staunch friends in private.—You very likely do not labour under the same difficulties that we do, who are situated in the very centre of corruption; and we have no doubt but that the increase of your Society keeps pace with the increase of those national calamities which ever must result from an unjust war.

Viewing with indignation the oppression so generally exercised all over the nation, against every individual suspected of

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favouring

favouring the cause of the People, and lamenting the gross ignorance under which the people in general labour, with regard to their rights and duties when called upon to serve on Juries, we have determined to re-publish, with the addition of a few notes and an appendix, a most excellent pamphlet, which made its first appearance about one hundred years ago, and was written by that eminent lawyer and honest man, Sir John Hawles, Solicitor General to King William; we therefore wish to know whether your Society would be inclined to circulate a number of them in your neighbourhood, and if so, you will not delay to give us your orders for as many as you would have sent you; and as we seek merely to defray the expense of the printing, the Committee have fixed the price so low as twenty-five Shillings per hundred.

Entreating you to give us an early answer, we remain, for the London Corresponding Society.

List of Societies annexed, viz.

Derby,
Stockport,
Manchester Ref.
Manchester Const.,
Sheffield Const.,
Nottingham.

Copy of a Letter from Coventry, to the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society.

Coventry, 10th August 1793.

Citizen ———,

I received your favour, together with the printed Resolutions of your respectable Society, on the 11th. I did not arrive here early on the 12th at night, not being able to leave Birmingham before that day.

Please to inform your Society that I believe I may be able to establish a Society in this despotic town.—We have drawn up our Address, Declaration, Resolutions, and are ordered to be printed, which I hope will be done this week.

We have adopted your last Resolutions, which you favoured me by the Post.

I am, Sir, your Obedient Servant, I will

I will bring these printed with me to London, as I hope to visit your Society as soon as I can leave this Society in safety.—They want strengthening, and will have a public meeting next Tuesday, and we expect much opposition from the Corporation; and as I am chief President, I will wait to receive the hire of this Ministerial badge of corruption.

I shall be glad if your Society could send an encouraging letter to this infant Society by that time.

I remain, with the greatest regard and esteem, your Society's friend and brother, labouring in the field of Reform, unsolicited by any party whatever.

I am, dear Clives, in the greatest sincerity and truth, your fellow-sinner, and friend to the human race.

P. E. You will, no doubt, exhort them to fear no power of corruption, let those powers be ever so great; but to pursue the Reform with a manly and steady perseverance, unitedly with every similar institution in Great Britain, and let us not suffer our Society to perish, but rather let us all die together for the good of our brother man; fearing no persecution whatever on the side of corruption, or that Ministerial vengeance can bring against those who are using their utmost exertions in the common cause of Freedom, or are promoting love and good will to the human race.

N. B. I shall be obliged to you if you will be so obliging to provide a room in some private family for myself and wife, at a moderate expense.—I wish to be in London in fourteen days.

Draft of a Letter from the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society to Mr Shrivley,

London, 31st October 1793.

Dear Sir,

With pleasure I peruse your favour of the 2d instant; but as yet have seen nor heard nothing of the two copies of Mr
Muir's

Muir's Trial, which you mention as being sent to the Society, and to myself. Be kind enough, notwithstanding, to return that Gentleman thanks for his polite attention; and assure him, that we view him in the light of a Martyr to Freedom, as well as Mr Palmer; and that our warmest hopes are, that the oppressors of mankind will either be ashamed or afraid of carrying their revengeful malice into execution.

The General Convention which you mention appears to Mr Margaret (to whom alone I have communicated your letter) and myself, to be a very excellent measure, and as such I could wish you, without delay, to communicate it officially to our Society, *without any words mentioning that you had written to me privately.* If, in your official letter, you should require us to send a deputation to that meeting, I have no doubt but our Society would with pleasure accept the invitation, and I am persuaded it may do much good. Our Freedom, as you justly observe, depends entirely upon ourselves, and upon our availing ourselves of this opportunity, which our *Self* may not be so soon recovered.—I am glad to discover by your testimony, that I was no ways mistaken in the high opinion I always had of Lord Duns's patriotism. A title may be a bar to disinterested patriotism; but, it seems, he has evaded it to be not an insuperable one.

You are right—it is true that we have had another general meeting, at which a hastily composed and suddenly produced Address to the King was read, applauded, and agreed to be presented; but on a cool revival, the said Address being found to be more ill-considered than spirited, more dangerous in its language, than advantageous in its object, besides being too long, the Committee, with the approbation of the majority of the Society, have adopted another, much briefer, more apposite, and relating solely to the War. Inclosed you have a copy of it. But you were misinformed when you was told we passed any Resolutions at that meeting, for we only came to one, and that rather of a private nature, namely, "That the conduct of Sir James Saunderson, in pre-
" venting the meeting of the London Corresponding Society

at

"at the Globe Tavern, Fleet Street, was of such a nature as
 "to place him below our notice."

I am, most sincerely,
 Your fellow labourer and well-wisher,

P. S. Mr Margatot desires to be remembered to you in the
 most affectionate manner. Do not in future, in the *address*
of your letter, mention any thing of the (London Corresponding
Society) for it was a thousand to one that I received that let-
 ter by post.

To Mr Skirving, Edinburgh.

Copy of a Letter from Coventry, to a person in London.

Coventry, October 13d 1793.

Citizen ———,

The reason why I did not answer your letter of last week
 was this; I thought you would like to be informed how our
 Society was going on, therefore I yesterday called a meeting
 at Howitt's, which was last night well attended, and several
 new members admitted; and I am informed by some of the
 members, that we shall have many more candidates for admis-
 sion next night. My expectations of our success in our new
 enterprise becomes more sanguine than ever. I have received
 from Mr ——— two letters, and a parcel of their publications,
 which I distributed last night, likewise those which we receiv-
 ed by you from the London Corresponding Society, for which
 our Society desired I would return their thanks to Citizens
 ——— and ———. I intend to send, inclosed in a box, to-mor-
 row evening, by Balloon coach, about fifty copies more of our
 addresses to Citizen ———, in order that he may dispose of them
 among the different divisions of the Corresponding Society; I
 shall likewise inclose a few addressed to Mr ———, Secretary
 to the Constitutional Society, London, which we shall be oblig-
 ed to you to present to him, and request him to sanction our
 efforts in the public cause with their correspondence.

I shall likewise send you your umbrella, carriage paid, by
 the coach, to-morrow evening.

Shall

Shall be obliged to Clive ——— if he would favour us with a few more of their publications, particularly their "Address to the Nation," and likewise a few of the Songs which begin with "God save the Rights of Man," &c.

I am, with respects to Mrs ———, &c.

Your sincere Friend and Fellow Citizen,

—————

Copy of a Letter from the Secretary to the Constitutional Society at Sheffield, to the Secretary of the Society for Constitutional Information.

Sheffield, Committee Room of the Constitutional Society,
November 21st 1793.

Sir,

Your letter, and the resolution of the Society for Constitutional Information in London, are this moment delivered to me by Mr Aiton, in answer to which I sit down instantly to inform you that the Society has already transmitted its sentiments to the Secretary of the Convention at Edinburgh, Mr Skirring, and declined sending a Delegation, for reasons which I will transcribe in the words of our letter.—" That it would
" have given this Society the most heartfelt satisfaction to
" have had a Delegation present at their approaching Convention, had we received timely notice of their wishes that it
" should be so—but it unfortunately happens, that all the
" gentlemen belonging to the Society, which it would chafe
" for so important a business, are so previously engaged in affairs which they cannot possibly postpone in so short an interval, that it is not in our power to comply with their requisition on the present occasion.

" This Society are also of opinion, that to give such a meeting its full effect, it would be necessary that the other Societies in South Britain should have communication with each other on the subject, and be able to ascertain that deputies would be sent from at least a Majority of the Societies in this part of the kingdom. And to advise that you should be happy to unite our efforts with theirs in one arm
" and

“and settled plan, we assure them, that if they think proper
 “to fix another meeting in January or February, or any o-
 “ther time which may be more agreeable, and give us im-
 “mediate notice thereof, and that they wish to see Delegates
 “from the several Societies in this part of the kingdom, we
 “will write to all those we are in Correspondence with, to
 “get such a delegation as may be truly respectable and im-
 “portant.”

The above extract will evince to you, Sir, and the Society for Constitutional Information, how far your proceeding meets with our approbation. There is a worthy member of this Society and of the Committee, and I believe also of the Committee of Twelve, admitted into your Society, Charles Alcock, now in London, and I doubt not but he has, before this will reach you, given you the whole information herein contained; but so fearfully exact am I in answering every letter on public business, that I will not trust to him, though I know he is particularly desirous of being introduced to you.

I was chosen Secretary, *pro tempore*, to answer the letter from Mr Skirving, and therefore continue the office thus much farther, not to keep you in suspense, as the Committee will not meet again before Wednesday next, and two or three of the members, who have seen your letter before I did, sent to request I would do so.

I cannot close this letter without remarking, that all the Societies we are in correspondence with have been remarkably zealous in their communications for several months past; so many we have addressed more than one or two without receiving any answer. This Society has been very active, and particularly in publishing, by which several individuals have suffered considerably, as the burthen has fallen chiefly on them. We have many thousand members, but a vast majority of them being working men, the war, which has deprived many of them of all employment, and almost every one of half his earnings, we have been crippled more than any other in the kingdom.—We have the satisfaction to know that we have done great good, but I fear we must content ourselves with good intentions and wishes in future, as our funds are not only exhausted, but the Society is considerably in debt, and

Copy of a Letter from the Secretary to the Constitutional Society at Leeds, to the Secretary to the Society for Constitutional Information at London.

91

Your's of the 19th I received, and laid it before the Committee of the Leeds Society on Monday, the 4th of this instant.

It is with great satisfaction we read your letter, and approve of your having elected your Delegates to serve upon such a laudable an undertaking; but if you mean for the Leeds Society to adopt the same measures, shall be glad if you will answer this immediately; as we are not acquainted with the time of their sitting, we fear our Delegates would be too late.

I am, Sir, with great respect,

Over Bill.

Yours humble servant,

5th Nov. 1953.

Secretary of the Constitutional Society.

Copy of a Letter from the Secretary of the Society for Constitutional Information at Birmingham, to the Secretary of the Society for Constitutional Information at London.

66

Your favour of the 26th ult. came safe to hand, and was read in a Committee of the Society on Sunday evening; and on first reading it, obtained the approbation of every member present.—This Society will, at all times, concur with you in any measure that may have a tendency to hasten the return of departed liberty.—Our sentiments on that subject are mutual with yours, and unchangeable.

The object of the mission of your Delegates being of the utmost importance to the people of this country, and so intimately connected with their dearest interests, that one would imagine they would not hesitate a moment in support of the measure, from a consciousness that upon the success of the exertions of the Friends to Reform depends the regeneration of Britain, from a state of slavery to a state of freedom and hap-

plots; and the exhibition of Burke's *Swiss* machine to the degraded character of freemen. We have only to regret that at present our ability will not allow us to co-operate with you, by sending a Delegate ourselves, in consequence of Mr Pitt's war of humanity having already utterly annihilated our trade in this town, and driven a great number of our bell members and mechanics across the Atlantic; and those that remain are but little better situated than the wretched inhabitants of Flanders. However, upon the whole, I believe it will be productive of good, as it has tended greatly to shake the pride, abate the malice, and confound many of the devices of the enemies to Reform, particularly among the Dons of Church and King. And, finally, it has made many proselytes to the cause of Liberty.

Please to accept our best wishes to you and your Society, and permit me to remain, in the name and behalf of the Birmingham Society for Constitutional Information,

Your most obedient humble servant,

_____, Secretary.

To _____, Secretary
to the Society for Constitutional
Information, London.

P. S. Shall be glad to hear from you on all occasions.

*Copy of a Letter from Coventry, to the Secretary of the Society
for Constitutional Information.*

In answer to your favour of the 24th of October, containing a copy of your Resolution of the 28th, relative to the election of Delegates, I am directed by our Society to communicate to the Society for Constitutional Information, London, their approbation of a measure which we conceive peculiarly calculated to accelerate the acquisition of the object proposed.

I



Your Incredible Harvest

Continued

Abstract

W. B. Lewis

Copy of a Letter from the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society, to Norwich.

London Corresponding Society, Nov. 13d, 1793.

Fellow Citizens,

You have been already informed, by the correspondence subsisting between the respective divisions of the patriotic Societies in England and Scotland, of the Convention called and now sitting in Edinburgh, for the purpose of obtaining a speedy and radical Reform in the system of Parliamentary Representation; and you are also in possession of the circumstances of our having sent two Delegates (—————) to represent our increasing Society in that respectable Assembly. The Society for Constitutional Information also elected two Representatives (—————), the latter only of whom has gone to Scotland for the discharge of his important mission.

Citizens, the object of our present letter is to inform you of the important conversations which our mission has already produced. The spirit and resolution it has diffused through the respective Societies in Scotland—the rapid increase of the avowed Friends of Liberty, which has already made its appearance, and the prospects which have been opened before us of the most complete union, the most determined perseverance, the most active exertion in every Constitutional measure, that can be desired for the recovery of our rights, and the complete renovation of the liberties and happiness which as men we are entitled to, and, as Britons, we have been taught to expect. An increase of affection, of zeal, of confidence; a concert of permanent action; a free communication and comparison of sentiments and intentions; mutual deliberation and mutual reliance—these are the fruits of the wise and spirited measures adopted by the Friends of Liberty in Scotland, and seconded by the Societies of London and of Ireland.

Britons, and fellow-citizens! Let us recall you to immediate co-operation with these efforts for the general good;—let us awake you to a sense of the importance of the present mo-

ment,

men, and persuade you, persuade all the Patriotic Societies in England, to strengthen immediate junction with this grand federation;—that as those who are hostile to our freedom are already united by compacts, interests, and confidences, the friends also of that glorious principle may be bound together by a link more firm, more intimate, and more durable, to resist every oppression and usurpation that may be attempted, and vindicate the "Rights of Man."

The Society at Norwich has already, in some degree, imitated our example: For though time and convenience did not permit them to elect a separate Delegate, they have sent a written authority to Citizens ——— to act for them in that capacity, together with instructions to enable him to state their sentiments to the Convention, and directions for him to correspond with them, and render their fraternity more complete.

Citizens! Permit us to unite our voices with those of our brethren in the North, to request you by some such method (if you cannot render it convenient immediately to send a Delegate of your own) to assist the closer union, and more immediate communication of the respective Societies.—Persuaded as we are that the Friends of Liberty, if encouraged by the conviction of general union to step forward and avow their sentiments, are already so numerous and respectable as to ensure a speedy termination of the calamities of an unjustifiable war, and a restoration of every right to which Britons and freemen are entitled:

We are, in the firm assurance of your zeal and sincerity in the cause of Liberty, your affectionate fellow citizens.

P. S. I received your letter, and I sent it to Edinburgh according to your direction.

Appendix E. (No 1.)

Sheffield, Committee Room of the Constitutional Society,
May 17th 1893.

Sir,

I AM directed by the Committee of this Society to acknowledge the receipt of yours of the 16th current, and of the Caledonian Chronicle of the same date, containing the Resolutions of the Convention of Delegates from the Friends of the People throughout Scotland—of which this Committee and the Society also, to which they have been read at the several district meetings, highly approve.

This Committee did not answer your former letter, because they were unwilling to put you to any unnecessary expense of postage, especially as no alteration could then be made in the subject matter thereof. Any communication which you may be pleased to favour this Society with, will be certain to come to hand (barring accidents) if directed generally to Mr _____ at _____, Church Lane, Sheffield. Though we have never had any misarrangings of letters which were directed to the Secretary of the Constitutional Society, yet that addition may perhaps be as well left out.—As to a proper channel; if the parcel is at any time very bulky and weighty, the waggon will be the best; but if a moderate size, it will come quicker by the coach: And the Committee will be very glad to receive accounts of proceedings so able and patriotically conducted.

The Committee beg leave to recommend to the Convention, and through its members to the several Societies, to purchase and promote as much as possible the circulation of that most useful periodical work, the Patriot, which certainly contains abundance of truly important political information, and has done the most essential service to the cause of freedom and of the people in this part of the island.

I am directed to express the particular approbation of this Committee, and Society also, of the Second Resolution of the
Convention

Convention, viz. "That the motion to discontinue their meetings when the petitions, &c. are presented, &c. is suspicious and insidious, &c. &c."

To show how men, possessing the same principles, will at the greatest distance coincide and jump, as it were, into the same sentiments, and expression of them, I beg leave to send you a short extract from the Address of our President, Mr ——— at our last general meeting, which was taken in short hand, and which the Committee hope they shall prevail on him to publish, as it is replete with political information, interesting anecdotes, and animated eloquence.

"You have no doubt, fellow citizens, all heard the fate of the petition so lately sent from this town and neighbourhood for a Parliamentary Reform; and I should suppose that the unjust, indecent, and insolent manner in which it has been rejected, and opposed admission into the House of Commons by the fanatics of Ministers, must have convinced you clearly, that the great cause for the support of which we have associated, demands our never-ceasing vigilance and attention.

"A Reform in Parliament is almost universally allowed to be essentially necessary to the preservation of this country. And as that great and important event can never be brought about but by the *powerful interposition of the great body of the people*, no lawful means should be left untried to remove the almost insurmountable impediments which lie in the way to obstruct and prevent so desirable a communication. The enemies to Reform are a very active, numerous, and powerful body in almost every neighbourhood, and never fail to unite on the slightest appearance of any circumstance which they conceive may be prejudicial to the corrupt and base system that has too long prevailed, and which it is so much their interest to continue.

"Our common enemies, I say, form an active, jealous, powerful, and well-disciplined phalanx, long trained to every possible mode of attack which can be made upon them—thoroughly skilled in the science of defence—but more particularly so in circumventing and smothering every attempt that may be made against them while in its infancy, and before

before it can arrive at the power of doing them harm—withstand the various attempts to disorganisation, calumniate, and, if possible, to annihilate Constitutional Societies, the Patriot, and all publications similar to it; as in these they see, with terrified aspects, the future sorrows of the people, and their dearest rights; with an all-grasping and domineering Aristocratic influence; possessing the greatest share of the landed property; with the purse of the nation at their command, and their eyes ever fixed on this ruling machine, "*Divide et impera*," they may be almost thought to be invincible, and nothing can avail against their efforts, but equal zeal, discipline, activity, and strict adherence together of the Friends of the People, and of the cause of Freedom.

"You see then, Citizens, that (that) it particularly behoves us not to sleep upon our possessions. The heavenly cherub liberty is in danger of being mutilated and destroyed by a torrent of influence and corruption, unexampled in the annals of the world. It is time, therefore, for all true lovers of their country to exert every effort to preserve and cherish that (that) inestimable blessing, deprived of which, both life and property, by being rendered precarious and uncertain, become but secondary considerations. In this most hushable of all pursuits, that of promoting and forwarding the public welfare, it becomes the peculiar duty of every one of us to contribute all in our power, by public and private advice and exertion, to prevent his fellow-labourers in this glorious vineyard from lagging in so momentous, though perhaps so arduous a work; but let us remember that our brave and hardy ancestors often fought, and bled at every vein, to transmit to us undiminished, a fair and unspotted inheritance to a Constitution—the basis, fountain, and centre of which was founded and composed of Freedom; a Constitution which they reared by their valour, supported by their virtue and wisdom, and cemented with their blood.

"The rascally time, the unsuspicious nature of some of our forefathers, added to their supineness and neglect, with other unfortunate circumstances on one hand, and on the other the

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[8]

granted!

gradual but never-ceasing endeavours to undermine and subvert the noble edifice, by every insidious and unperceived act and machination that bold and interested men could devise—their sycophants of Courts—their venal hirelings and male prostitutes, who feed and fatten without remorse on the spoil and plunder of their industrious and oppressed countrymen—their political Elites, who would sell their country and its Liberties for a mass of pottage, have brought us to the very brink of ruin, and the verge of slavery; and, wishing to delude us with the forms of the Constitution, have gone high to sap and destroy every prop and pillar by which the Constitution itself is in reality supported.

"Be it ours however, to keep in mind, that there is not in the whole range of human nature so degraded and despicable a sight as that of a nation, a people who were once free, having degenerated into slaves; and let us not ever forget, that notwithstanding we of the present day did not receive perfect freedom from our immediate forefathers, we still know that we have a just claim to it; that it is our duty to prosecute that claim before our adversaries shall have the insolence to plead prescription as a bar to it. Though the possession is not in us, the right is, and we are bound to assert that right, and transmit it clear of all incumbrances, to our posterity. What! shall we unremotely prosecute our claim, and shew indignance at the idea of being robbed, or unjustly deprived of a paltry cottage, or a few acres of dirty land, and shall we tamely and basely surrender those important rights and privileges which are more valuable than all the acres that one man ever possessed? Forbid it, Consistency! Forbid it, Justice! Forbid it, Heaven!

"But how, it may be asked, how are we to prosecute our claims? How are we to recover those rights of which we have been so surreptitiously deprived? I answer, by our fortitude and unanimity—by an inflexible perseverance in demanding those rights which no power on earth is entitled to withhold from us. A Reform in Parliament, I repeat, is absolutely necessary to save this country from ruin. I will tell you why," &c.—He then gives a display of the defective state of Representation;

Sanction ; there, that as things are now framed, no administration, however inclined to do so, can govern according to the true principles of justice and sound policy, and the real interests of the people, *from the undue influence of the Crown.* Describes the double cabinet in a very severe strain of animadversion ; takes notice, that the only argument attempted to be urged against the measure, is the impropriety of the time ; and on every occasion, since its first being introduced in 1692, the same objection has been uniformly opposed to it. " But let me ask these men, what is a proper time ? In times of peace ; in times of war ; in times of financial depression ; in times of prosperity ; though the necessity of it was always admitted, still the time was improper. When Mr Grey, in the last Session, gave notice of his intended motion on this head, though we had been just before represented by the apostate Pitt, in all the glare of his didactic pompousness, to be at that moment in a state of unexampled prosperity, yet then the time was improper.

" In the year 1764, after the conclusion of the war, this country was equally prosperous, and ranked infinitely higher in point of consequence amongst the nations of Europe, when we were feared and courted by every power in it, then, also, the time was improper ; we were afterwards involved in a ruinous and expensive war with America, which drained this country of its citizens and its treasures, loaded us with an accumulation of taxes we were hardly able to bear, was prosecuted contrary to the wishes of the nation, and Parliament still voting supplies out of the people's pockets, the system of corruption was obvious, clear as the sun at noon day, yet still it was not proper to agitate a Reform : Notwithstanding it was at the same time granted, that if a Reform had been made in the year 1764, all those subsequent notorious evils would have been prevented.

" The plain truth of the matter is this—in the eye of Ministers and their followers, in the eye of placemen, pensioners, and the almost innumerable host of the greedy and voracious bloodsuckers and devourers of the spoil and plunder of the people, no time is proper. The argument is a stale worn-out

pick of every minister, and every vocal tool who supports him; Charles Townsend used to say, petitions to this effect were improper at one stage; the season of war, and the season of peace. In peace, because they tended to disturb the general tranquillity; and in war, because ministers had sufficient employment for their abilities without being troubled with petitions. In this avowal of a Minister there is certainly some honesty; but much more of what the Irish term *modest assurance*, or what a blunt Briton calls *downright impudence*.

"The same fallacious and delusive argument is made use of at the present moment; and those very speakers, who contended most warmly and vehemently, that a reform in Parliament was absolutely necessary to save the Constitution, in 1785, have now the hardihood effrontery to assert, that it is *at present*, not only unnecessary, but *absolutely unnecessary*—Citizens, reflect on this; be no longer deceived; convince yourselves first that it is necessary, and then determine resolutely, and like Englishmen worthy of their glorious ancestors, that in matters of moment there is no time like the present."

Thus ended a speech of near two hours, which convinced the Society of the absolute necessity there is to be more active and efficient in the great cause we are engaged to support. It is remarkable, that at this meeting a motion was made to discontinue our monthly meetings, and to have them only once in three months, which was repudiated by the president, and scouted by the Society as *foolish and ignominious*; and the Society has greatly increased every day since.

The enclosed paper has had a very good effect in Manchester and this place, where it has been well circulated; and as Mr Dundas has had the unfortunate effrontery to say in St Stephen's, that war is not the cause of the present National distress, this Committee think too much pains cannot be taken to convince the people that it is. They therefore submit it to your consideration, whether it may not be advisable

to

to re-print and circulate it in your town and neighbourhood.

In the name, and by order of the Committee, I remain,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

(Signed) _____,

Addressed,

Secretary.

Mr Wm Skirving, Edinburgh.

(No. 2.)

Delegate meeting of the Constitutional Society Leeds, May
29th 1793.

Sir,

By request of the Sheffield Society, and having received directions from them for the purpose of corresponding with all the Societies in England and Scotland:

We, the members of the Constitutional Society in Leeds, in order to obtain the desired end of Parliamentary Reform, desire fraternal communication with the Society of Edinburgh.

We shall be glad of any information or instruction in your power on all occasions; and hope you will find the Leeds Society always faithful to the interests of the people; and though they are but few, not exceeding two hundred, they are men, and are determined to exert their utmost in order to instruct their neighbours on their common interests.

With this we send you a copy of our Address and Declaration, and shall ever acknowledge all favours from you.

Wishing the cause we have embarked in every degree of success, I remain, in the name and by order of the Society,

Sir, Yours, &c.

Addressed "To the Secretary of the Constitutional Society, Edinburgh," and on the back "To Mr William Skirving, Edinburgh, Scotland."

(No. 3.)

Free Masons Tavern, Saturday the 18th of May 1793.

At a general meeting of the Society of the Friends of the
People

People, associated for the purpose of obtaining a Parliamentary Reform, held this day.

————— is the Chair.

Resolved unanimously, That the thanks of this Society be returned to the Convention of Delegates at Edinburgh, for their zeal and activity in the cause of Parliamentary Reform, and to express a hope and wish that they will proceed with the same spirit, industry, and temper, during the interval between the present time, and the meeting of the next Session of Parliament.

In name, and by order of the Society,

—————, Chairman.

(No. 4.)

Sir,

I have the honour to enclose you a copy of the resolution of thanks to the Convention of Delegates at Edinburgh from the Friends of the People in London, and beg you will communicate the same to the various Societies with which you correspond in Scotland.

I am, Sir,

Yours, &c.

—————,
Secretary to the Committee.

(No. 5.)

Sir,

The speech I sent is not the property of this Society, but in compliance with the request contained in your letter I have applied to the proprietor, who gives you full permission to re-print it, and distribute as many as you think proper. Your conduct on this occasion must give satisfaction to every Friend of Reform.

When I again meet with any thing good and short, I will certainly send it to you. I suppose you have seen William Fox's pamphlets; they are very short, and extremely good indeed, particularly that against the war.

The plan of Delegates would be very improper in this country at present. A very small part of it indeed would be

active for Reform; if such a meeting is attempted, it will operate like many rash steps of some who wish well to the cause, much to its disadvantage.

I thank you for the parcel of minutes which is come to hand, and remain,

Yours, &c.

July 13. 1793.

Addressed,
William Skirving, Esq,
Edinburgh.

(No. 6.)

Dear Sir,

On Saturday last I received a copy of Mr Palmer's Trial, and on Monday several copies of Mr Muir's, which I have ordered to be disposed of as directed. I had read both before—I shall bind them with Palmer's Trial, and I return you and Mr Muir thanks for them. I think Mr Palmer's case, in some respects, still more extraordinary than Mr Muir's.—Is it a crime to advise prudence and moderation?

Be so kind as to desire Mr Scott to send regularly the Edinburgh Gazetteer to me, under cover to G. Gray, Esq, M. P.—Let him charge it either to me or the Society, and I will pay for it at such times and in such manner as he desires.

I hope none of the violence which has done mischief to the cause of Reform in England will be imported into the Scottish Convention.

The conduct of the Friends to Reform in Scotland has always been admired, and I hope their prudence and moderation will be continued.

I am, &c.

October 24th 1793.

Addressed,

Mr W. Skirving,

Opposite the foot of the Old Assembly Cloak, Edinburgh.

Fellow

(No. 7.)

London, November 8th 1793.

Fellow Citizens,

I duly received your favour of the 4th instant, and laid it before the Committee of Delegates last night, who were anxiously waiting for intelligence from Edinburgh, and were well satisfied with the agreeable account of the great number and zeal of the Friends of Freedom in Scotland.—That part of your letter which mentioned your visiting different towns in Scotland, for the purpose of promoting the cause—they were pleased with the idea, but they thought that it could not be put in practice, on account of the necessary supplies, which come in but very slowly—it is to be mentioned in the different divisions.—We have elected ——— (by ballot) Chairman of the Committee for the remainder of the quarter—we have also appointed a Committee of Constitution, separate from the Committee of Delegates.—One member is chose from each division, to meet on this night for the first time, and to be totally unconnected with the Committee of Delegates.—We still increase in number—and the Address to the King, to put an end to the War, is ordered to be advertised to receive signatures—in the Courier, Chronicle, Eyer's Sunday Gazetteer, afterwards by Hand Bills, &c. We have opened a correspondence with a new Society at———. I have to inform you of the wish of the Society, that you would favour them with the number of Delegates in the Convention, and the number from England also, and how the civil and military power retards your meeting. And that you would send such a report from the Convention as might appear in the news-papers in London. Send us an Edinburgh Gazetteer when there is any thing in it of importance. I would have sent you a Courier, but they informed me that they sent several to the Coffee-houses and Taverns in Edinburgh, for that reason I thought it unnecessary. I hope to have more time to write to you more fully next time.

As

As ——— says, the post is just going off, so more at present from

—————,
Secretary.

Addressed,

Mr Margaret, and } Delegates from
Mr Gerald, } London.

(No. 1.)

To the members of the Scotch Convention.

Worthy Sir,

The notice we have had of your different meetings, being so late as not conveniently to allow of our election of a Delegate to join your Assembly, I take the freedom to communicate a few lines in the name of the Society. Our congratulations are your due for the spirited manner in which you have shown yourselves the advocates and promoters of Reformation: You, Citizens, have deserved well of your country, and your conduct is the subject of our applause—the strong sentiments you have imbibed are the objects of our admiration. Our minds particularly embrace the doctrines of the Right of Universal Suffrage, of the necessity of Annual Parliaments, and of adopting these principles into a definitely worded Constitutional Code, alterable only by the expression of the general will of the British people, properly taken.

We doubt not of your sentiments of fraternity towards the patriots of our town, whose desire is to promote universal information and universal liberty.

The All-wise Father of men prosper your undertakings.

—————,
Secretary to the Leeds Constitutional Society,
pro Tempro.

Leeds, Nov. 18th 1793.

Addressed, Mr William Skirving, Edinburgh.

(No. 2.)

Sir,

I have the satisfaction to inform you, that the Delegates from the Societies in London have, at length, arrived at Edinburgh.

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disburgh. Delegates from the other Societies in England, and who are now upon the road, will soon also be here to wait upon the *Friends of the People*, in order to establish an *inter-societal fraternity* between the two nations, and to adopt those measures which at this *crucial period* may have a tendency to save the Country.

Solemnly pledged as you are to a common and a just cause, no hardship and no expense can be thought too great for you, while you are conscious that you are discharging your duty. With no propriety can you refuse to attend upon your brethren from England, who, at so much expense, and from so great a distance, have come to unite their affections and deliberations with you.

I feel it my duty, in coincidence with the sentiments of the General Committee here, again to recd the Societies by their Delegates to this place. Every moment is precious, and delay is synonymous to treachery.

I expect therefore, Sir, to have the honour of seeing you on the 14th current in the *General Convention of the Delegates*, in compliance with the public advertisement, which I was bound to insert, in my official capacity, in the *Gazetteer* of yesterday, to which I entreat your particular attention.

If you cannot possibly attend, it will be proper to call the *Committee* of your Society, to appoint one or two in your place. No exertion on the part of a friend should be wanting at this *important crisis*, to render this Convention still more respectable, and none who have the *cause* at heart, and discern how much is *at stake*, will be remiss.

Let it be our ardent prayer to God, that his wisdom may direct their measures, and that his benediction may attend the execution of them.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

WILLIAM SKIRVING, Secretary.

Edinburgh, Nov. 7th 1793.

Extracts

(N^o 10.)

Extracts from the Minutes of the General Convention of the Friends of the People, held at Edinburgh, and of their General Committee, convened in consequence of the arrival of the English Delegates, and of Citizen Hamilton Rowan and Simon Barker from Ireland, as mentioned in the foregoing Narrative.

In the Fifth Day's Sitting of the Convention (19th October 1793) Mr. C——— moved, " That this Convention resolve to claim for themselves and their Constituents the right of Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments."

At the same Sitting a letter was read from the Four United Societies of Ireland.

" Mr. Skirving read the thanks of the General Meeting of the Friends of the People at Free Masons Tavern, dated London, 18th May 1793, as returned by them to the Convention of Delegates at Edinburgh, for their zeal and activity in the Cause of Parliamentary Reform. He also read a similar letter from Mr ———, dated London, 5th October 1793, another dated London, 15th October 1793, respecting the appointment of Messrs Margaret and Oswald.

" Mr Skirving next read a Letter from Mr ——— Secretary to the Association at London, dated Fifth Street, No. 7, October 26th 1793.

" Mr ——— read a letter from the Constitutional Society at Sheffield, dated 17th May 1793, and signed ——— Secretary, upon the whole objects of Reform in general, containing some humorous remarks on the arguments advanced by the enemies of Reform, which were received with great approbation.—Mr Skirving next read the printed paper contained in the said letter, addressed to the unemployed artisans, &c. of Manchester, and containing a number of excellent remarks upon the calamities of war, signed—Sidney."

In the General Committee (6th November 1793) it appears, that a citizen, one of the Edinburgh Delegates, having moved

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ed that the London Delegates should fix the situation of their Societies, Citizen Margaret answered, " That the Societies
 " in London were very numerous, though sometimes flut-
 " ting. In some parts of England whole towns are Reform-
 " ers; Sheffield, and environs there, 30,000.—In Norwich
 " there are 30 Societies in one.—If we could get a Conven-
 " tion of England and Scotland called, we might represent six
 " or seven hundred thousand males, which is a majority of
 " all the adults in the kingdom; and Ministry would not dare
 " to refuse us our rights."

Citizen Butler, from Ireland, then said, " He did not know
 how far he was at liberty to say any thing, as he was not a
 Delegate; but he would give an account of Ireland: The
 executive part of the Government were almost omnipotent;
 the landed interest almost omnipotent; the manufacturer idle.
 The last Parliament was expected to have given Ireland eman-
 cipation; however that prospect was flattering, a few weeks
 changed the scene.—An infamous coalition took place between
 the Opposition and Ministry; the Catholics retired with what
 they had got.—No longer opposed by them, the Government
 turned their oppressive measures against the Friends of Re-
 form.—The United Liffers were persecuted; he himself
 had experienced six months imprisonment.—Belfast was de-
 clared to be in a state of rebellion—though freedom was not
 tried up in the streets, yet it dwelt in almost every heart.
 Universal emancipation was the measure for which he was an
 advocate.—All that he knew of the country was, that the first
 day his friend was in Edinburgh he was arrested, for nothing
 that he knew, except it was for being so wicked as to come
 here.—In Scotland they yet met in Convention; in Ireland the
 Parliament had enacted laws against it.—When a law like that
 should take place here, he was afraid Presidens would vanish "

Mr C—— said, " That he hoped those that would pass
 such an act of Parliament should be forced to eat it, and hop-
 ed that Scotland and England should not submit to it."

Citizen Gould said, " that he came here armed with the
 power of Delegation.—If our neighbour's house is on fire, the
 greatest should be our vigilance to prevent the flames seizing

our own—A parchment piece of justice had been procured in Ireland; he hoped that if ever it was passed here, we should throw it in the face of our oppressors. Every thing the people had gained had been through Conventions—The Revolution was the consequence of a Convention—the Revolution established, that trust abused was reasonable—the Revolution excluded all placemen and pensioners—Do we enjoy any benefit from that act? It made Ministers responsible—How many had Ministers have we seen go down to the grave in peace, and honoured with all the dignities a King can confer?—Union would carry our principles into execution—A citizen from Ireland told you, that as soon as the alarm bell was rung, the Opposition joined the Minister—Party is over a kind of prey, and the people their baitment.”

On the First Day's Sitting of the Convention (19th November 1799) after it was resumed, Mr Margaret moved,—“ That previous to publishing an address to the Public, a Committee be forthwith appointed to consider the means, and draw up the outlines of a plan of general union and co-operation between the two nations in their Constitutional pursuit of a thorough Parliamentary Reform;” which was unanimously agreed to.

The minutes of the Second Day's Sitting bear—That Charles Gerald “ vindicated the plan of divisions, as tending to enable “ the Convention to make up their minds upon the business “ to come before them.”—Mr Margaret vindicated the plan, as tending to shorten the business of the Convention; and insisted that the familiar intercourse that would take place in these divisions, would be the chief use of them.

—“ Another Delegate showed the necessity and importance of the *Plan of Organisation*, and insisted that the Divisions were necessary, and that the loss of a day or two was of no consideration, compared with the magnitude of the object.”

“ Mr Margaret promised, in name of himself and his colleagues from England, that they would grudge no time to execute with propriety the important business they were come upon.”

" The Delegate from Sheffield rose to remove any remaining objections that might be made against the Plan. He urged, that the grand point in raising a good superstructure, was to lay a good foundation ; to do which, no time should be grudged ; and showed the great utility of the Plan in the nomination of Committees."

" And the Convention were accordingly divided into Districts, and places appointed for their Meetings."

Mr Margaret, of new, moved, " That a Committee be appointed to consider of, and draw up a proper Plan of Union between the two Nations, according to the resolution of yesterday."

In the Sitting of the 21st of November, in consequence of Reports from the different Sections, a Committee of Thirteen was chosen to form an Union upon Mr Margaret's Plan.

In the same meeting Gerald stated, " That to honest men nothing was so valuable as truth, and that nothing can possibly tend so much to the disclosure of truth as discussion and deliberation. That it was also very important that the Committee should know as much as possible of the public mind, in order that they might act in union with it. The Convention then resolved itself into a Committee upon the motion of Mr ~~xxxxxxxx~~ and many valuable hints were thrown out by Citizens * * * * * Gerald observed, that whatever dissension of opinion might exist in these walls, we can never forget that our friends and our enemies are in common, and that our object is equally the same. He took a review of the means we use to use in order to secure our object. He entered fully into the subject of Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments. He fully proved the rights of the People to their benefits by their ancient Constitution. He minutely investigated the principles of Government. He asserted, that the end of all government is the good of the governed : That if money be taken out of his pocket against his consent, it is of little consequence whether it be taken by the robber on the beach, or the Monarch on the throne. He made many remarks upon the Revolution Settlement, and the benefits
gained

gained by the last Revolution, and demonstrated clearly, that they are now totally *totus unus*. He warned the Convention against the choice of any other than known and plain men like themselves, men uncontaminated by the pestiferous air of Courts."

A Delegate from London, during this Day's Sitting, in absence of ———, a Scots Delegate, " gave in the confirmation of the Committee's report, respecting the election of Presidents; of three Assistants, one to go out daily; and respecting the Council of the Table." He likewise proposed, " That the whole reports of the Committee should be delayed till the report was completed, and urged as a reason for delay, that "" was employed in completing the report of the Committee."

The Fifth Day's Sitting, Convention Hall, November 13d
1793.

Citizen Gerald appointed Chairman.

" Citizens ——— having read the minutes of last Sitting, the President stated, That this morning he had received a letter from our friends in Norwich, who desired him to inform the Convention, that they remained steady in the cause, and had nominated Citizen Margaret their Delegate, and that they would contribute their share of the expenses attending the Convention. Mr Margaret accordingly accepted of the office, who congratulated the Convention upon the accession of such a great number of friends."

During this Sitting there is the following motion, " It was moved, That from thenceforth the Convention should be styled *The British Convention of the Delegates of the People, assembled to obtain Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments*."—Agreed to unanimously. Also this other motion, " A motion was also made for the Convention allowing the members of the United Society of Irishmen to speak and vote here."

" *Referred to the Session.*"

Citizens

Citizens *****¹, who were country Delegates, " requested leave of absence, which was granted, *upon condition that they would do their utmost to find Delegates in their place.*"

In the same Sitting there are the following motions, viz.

" Motion by Mr *** respecting *dividing the country into departments, and appointing Provincial Conventions, whereby they may become more acquainted with each other's sentiments.*"

" *Referred to the Committee of Union.*"

" Motion by ***, containing thanks to the movers of the division into classes, mentioning the advantages already obtained from it, and requesting a fresh draft. Referred to the Committee of Regulations, and agreed that the members of societies in Edinburgh join the sections."—And this day's proceedings close as follows: " The President wanted the sections to meet as full as possible on Monday."

" Citizen ***'s motion, relative to admitting the members of the united society of Irishmen to speak and vote in this Convention, came forward for discussion, when Citizens — — — spoke upon it, and agreed to and guaranteed by a solemn joining of hands—it being followed by a motion for transmitting the above resolution to Citizen Archibald Hamilton Rowan, which was passed accordingly."

" Secretary Skirving stated, that he had just now received five shillings from an unknown hand for the use of the Convention: honourable mention was ordered to be made of this patriotic donation."

" A motion made by ***** respecting the appointment of an interim Committee at the end of every Convention, to call together the Delegates on extraordinary emergencies."

At the close of this meeting, the Convention being divided into sections, a Delegate moved, " That the motions should be laid before the sections, and desired the Council of the Table to consider on those that were to be first discussed."

Scotsman

Seventh Day's Sitting, 25th November 1793.

After debate, an original motion was referred to the " Committee of Finance."

" Ordered, That the Convention shall cause a regular set of books to be kept for the insertion of Minutes, Motions, and other Proceedings; a book of Finance, &c. to be at all times subject to the inspection of an Intermediate Committee."

" All these motions were ordered to lie over to be considered by the sections."

" Mr ———'s motion being taken under consideration, amendments were proposed by Citizen * * * * *."

" Mr Margaret pled for adopting the spirit of Mr ———'s motion; but thought it would be more advantageous to postpone adopting it till the conclusion of the Convention's business."

" Moved by Mr Margaret, That a Committee, consisting of the mover, seconder, and those who had moved for amendments of Mr ———'s motion, be appointed to draw up a motion from the whole, that may probably meet the ideas of the whole Convention.—After some conversation, it was agreed upon, on the motion of Mr * * *, that the vote of the house be put; 1st, on the spirit of Mr ———'s motion; 2dly, on the words of the motion; and 3dly, on Mr Margaret's motion." Agreed.—" The Rules of the House being taken on the first, it carried unanimously, to adopt the motion as to the spirit of it.—On the 2nd, it carried by a great majority, not to adopt the motion as so worded;—and, 3dly, It was resolved, that the said motion, and all amendments, be referred as above."

Convention Hall, 28th November 1793.

Ninth Day's Sitting.

Citizen * * * in the Chair.

" Citizen * * * read the amendments upon Citizen ———'s motion, as agreed upon by the Committee; and it was agreed, that

that the House should resolve itself into a Committee for its mature consideration."—In the course of the conversation, Citizen * * * gave a history of the Habeas Corpus Act.—After an excellent discussion of the question, pertinent remarks, and amendments, the Convention was recessed; and the whole, as amended, being read over, the members stood upon their feet, and passed the resolution unanimously, as follows.

[Here a blank is left in the minutes, as mentioned in the Report.]

After the said resolution was agreed to and solemnly approved of as above, the minutes import, "That Citizen Gould, in an energetic and animated speech, addressed the meeting, and expressed his happiness at the motion passed; and expated the act of the Irish Parliament, called a Convention Bill—and Citizen * * * followed him in a manly speech, and poured the influence of the Executive Government over the Parliament."

Citizen Margaret read and proposed the following motion: "That a Secret Committee of Three, with the Secretary, be appointed to determine the place where such Convention of Emergency shall meet; that such place shall remain a secret with them, and with the Secretary of this Convention; and that each Delegate shall, at the breaking up of the present Session, be entrusted with a sealed letter, containing the name of the place of meeting; that this letter shall be delivered unopened to his constituents, the receipt of which shall be acknowledged by a letter to the Secretary—preserved in the same state until the period shall arrive at which it shall be deemed necessary for the Delegates to set off. This motion was seconded by * * *, and the same passed unanimously. Accordingly, the following Citizens were nominated a Secret Committee upon this business, viz. Margaret, * * * * *, with the Secretary; and they were requested to devise the best possible means of conveying this intimation to those Societies whose views

views are the same with ours, but may not have Delegates at this time."

The minutes of this day's Sitting close with a variety of motions; and amongst others the following, by Citizen * * *, and seconded by Citizen * * *, " That a fund be raised by subscription for defraying the expense of small patriotic publications, to be distributed in the Highlands. Every publication shall bear the figure of a Highland man in full dress, with target and broad sword, to attract the attention of Highlandmen. No publication to cost more than half a penny."

By Citizen * * *, " That a Committee be appointed to draw up a declaration of the natural, inalienable, and unexpressible Rights of Man; and that the same be prefixed to an address to the People of Great Britain."

And, " That a Committee of observation be appointed in London, to give the earliest intimation of any motion of the kind contained in the foregoing resolution to the different Societies."

Convention Hall, First Year of the British Convention,
29th Nov. Anno Domini 1793.—Tenth Day's Sitting.

Citizen * * * is the Chair.

" Citizen Margaret gave in the report of the Committee of Regulations; which was ordered to be printed; and copies to be given in to the Sisters on Monday, for their consideration."

" The Secretary read * * *'s motion for a Committee of Observation to be appointed in London. Citizen Margaret stated, That there was no occasion for a Committee of that nature in London, as there were several thousands of people in that city upon the look-out. It was accordingly agreed, *That the Convention should request the London Committee of Correspondence to give the earliest intelligence of what passed in Parliament.*"

" A letter from a friend, &c. which had been transmitted to A. Scott, of the Gazetteer, was read, containing patriotic Sentiments, and two guineas; and Citizen Taylor presented

a guinea from another Citizen, whose name he was not at liberty to mention.—It was stated by the Secretary, that a Citizen from London was present, who was to give 5*l.* 5*s.* to the Convention, when a collection should be made for enlightening the Highlanders. The thanks of the House was unanimously given to the before-mentioned Patriots for their donations."

Eleventh Day's Sitting, 30th November 1793.

"The Secretary read a motion, that a Committee be appointed to revise each day's minutes, immediately on the rising of the Convention, for the purpose of sending them to the press, to make hereafter a daily bulletin of the same. The question being put, the motion passed unanimously."

"Citizen ———— likewise moved, That no person should be allowed the *Honour of the Sitting*, unless recommended by two members; which, with amendments, as in the motion itself, passed unanimously."

"The Secretary read a motion for publishing the natural, unalienable, and unscriptible Rights of Man, which was ordered to be given to the Committee of Union."

"It was moved, That Captain * * * should report some circumstances to the Convention; for which purpose, the House resolved itself into a Committee, when he read an account of the trial and sentence of D. Holt, for reprinting the Duke of Richmond and Mr Pitt's resolution for a Parliamentary Reform; after which, the chairman being replaced, the Secretary moved, That Captain * * * should be allowed the *Honour of the Sitting*."

"Citizen * * * * from Strathaven, and * * * from Hamilton, requested leave of absence should be granted, and moved, That all the delegates who had left the Convention, should receive letters to return immediately, and remain at their posts until the important business, which was daily introduced into the Convention, should be properly discussed."

"A motion to fine those members who did not attend their Sessions.—The order of the day was called for,

" A motion for drawing out a scroll of a petition to Parliament ; which being read, *The order of the day was moved upon it.*"

Monday, 2d December 1793.—First year British Convention.

Twelfth Day's Sitting.

Citizens * * * in the Chair, and Citizens * * * and * * * assistants at the Table.

" Citizen Skirving insisted, that all the members, both of the Convention and primary Societies, should subscribe a common league and covenant."

" Citizen Gerald pled for liberty of sentiment ; and compared the people and their enemies to the worshippers of the true God and of Baal. He afterwards read some paragraphs from the Edinburgh Herald, with suitable comments ; and compared the Constitution of 1688 to a dead horse. He shewed the infidelity of the title " Gentlemen," and the propriety of the term " Citizen ;" remarked the impropriety of the mode of promulgating our laws, by restricting them to be sold by one printer, and published in the Saxon character, which few can read."

" Citizen Skirving also pled for the motion, and insisted that it was proper, on all occasions, to take the opinion of the primary Societies, and considered *the Convention as only a Committee of the people.*"

" Citizen Margaret pled in favour of the motion. The approbation given by the *many thousands of their constituents in London, Sheffield, Norwich, Leeds, &c.*"

" The motion being agreed to, with one dissentient voice, who afterwards seconded, Citizen * * * read a spirited advertisement from the Nottingham Society, inserted in a Sheffield newspaper.

" A motion made by Citizen * * *, and seconded by Citizen * * *, That the Convention shall pass some resolutions respecting the late unprecedented and unwarrantable infringements

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ments on the freedom of the press, particularly the arbitrary sentence of Judge Wilson against Mr Holt, for reprinting the Duke of Richmond and Mr Pitt's plan of Reform."

" Citizens * * * and * * * moved, That this Convention take under consideration, whether (after the contemptible manner in which the late petitions for Parliamentary Reform were treated) they shall again petition for Reform, or at what period they should recommend the same to their constituents."

At the Thirteenth Day's Sitting,

: Citizens * * *, of Sheffield, produced a commission from the Leeds Constitutional Society, appointing him their delegate; which was approved of by the Convention.

The minutes of the Fourteenth Day's Sitting are begun and entered thus :

" Edinburgh, 4th November 1793.

" Fourteenth Sitting of the B. Convention."

In the above, *November* is, by mistake, inserted in place of *December*.

" Mr Margaret begged leave to bring in a motion to the effect, That the moment of the illegal dispersion of the present Convention be considered as our summons to repair to the place of meeting for the Convention of Emergency by the Secret Committee; and that the same motion be considered this evening.

" The Convention then heard the only two motions on their table read, which regarded the same matter; and it being objected to, that the business of these motions was to be taken up to-morrow evening, after some conversation it was carried by a vote of the House, to delay further consideration till to-morrow evening. Mr Margaret being prepared to bring forward his motion above mentioned, the same was taken under consideration, and was as follows:

" Moved, That the moment of any illegal dispersion of the British

British Convention, shall be considered as a summons to the delegates to repair to the place of meeting appointed for the Convention of Emergency by the Secret Committee; and that the Secret Committee be instructed to proceed, without delay, to fix the place of meeting.

"The Convention having considered the motion fully, unanimously resolved the same, and appointed the Secret Committee to proceed as directed."

A Delegates from Glasgow presented to the Sections, during the sitting of this Convention, a motion of the following tenor: viz.

"The delegation from Glasgow moves, That the Convention take into their consideration the nature and extent of a resolution adopted by their constituents, and by most of the other Societies in Scotland, and afterwards ratified and approved of at the General Convention held at Edinburgh in December 1792, the import of which was, That if any member of their Society, associated for the purpose of obtaining a Parliamentary Reform, should, while in the legal prosecution of that object, be oppressed or persecuted by the *Arms of Power*, they should not only *use* *with* *the* *assistance* *of* *the* *Society* *to* *which* *they* *belong*, *but* *also* *by* *the* *united* *efforts* *of* *all* *their* *brethren* *in* *Scotland*.

"Since the above period, however, we are sorry to say, several of our members have been *persecuted*, and that in a most wanton manner; and the above resolution (which, if duly put in force, would, we humbly apprehend, have the happy effect of emboldening those who have already come forward, and of encouraging others who have not yet taken any active part to unite their efforts in the general cause), has never yet been attended to.

"We therefore humbly move, That the Convention take into consideration the above particulars, and consider what measures may be most *conduive* *towards* *the* *performance* *of* *the* *obligation* *we* *lie* *under*, *in* *consequence* *of* *that* *resolution*, *and* *there-*
by

by them to the world that we are not unmindful of those who have already suffered, or may in future suffer in their country's cause.

By order of the Delegation.

Edinburgh, October 30th 1793.²⁰

(N^o 11.)

Extract of a Letter from Mr Margaret to the Norwich Society, dated Edinburgh, 24th November 1793.

" You know, that at our arrival here, we found that the Convention had, after sitting four days, adjourned, and the Delegates were all gone back to their respective habitations, without proceeding any further in the business of Reform, than simply agreeing, that nothing short of Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments would satisfy them ; and, on that ground, proposing not to send any petition to the King or to the Parliament, lest, by so doing, the enemies of Reform might be tempted to counteract their wish, and exert themselves to prevent a peace ; but at the same time it was recommended by the Convention, that all friends to Reform should sign any petition for peace, which might originate in another quarter.—We soon prevailed on the Edinburgh Committee, to send the adjourned Convention. The country Societies, informed that England meant to take a serious part in the great cause, sent back all their former Delegates; and several of them who had not sent Delegates to the prior Convention, have sent some to this one. On Tuesday the 19th instant, the Convention opened. The number of Delegates amounted to 180 ; some of them came even from so far as Cromartie ; the reception we experienced was highly flattering ; we mutually gave and received encouragement and animation. I shall not at present attempt to give you a minute detail of what has since passed, because the minutes are to be printed, and then I will not fail sending you a few copies of them, and will, I hope, be able at my return, to come to Norwich, and give you an accurate verbal account

of every transaction. Mention, if you have any instructions to give me, send them without delay, otherwise I shall act for you conformably to those laid down by the London Corresponding Society, a copy of which you doubtless have received from them.—The Convention have begun, by establishing a list of rules for the organisation of the present, and even future *Conventions*.—Next, we established a Committee of Union between the two nations, a Committee of Finance, and a Committee to take into consideration the projecting or establishing a petriotic newspaper :—and on Saturday last, we passed a provisory Decree of Union. The whole Convention standing hand in hand, solemnly pledged themselves to each other to renounce all national distinctions, to abide firmly and truly by each other, until the great end is obtained ; and at the same time we assumed the title of *The British Convention of Delegates of the People, associated to obtain Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments*."

(N^o 12.)

Copy of a Letter from Messrs Gerald and Margaret, to the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society.

Edinburgh, Tuesday, December 26, 1793.

Citizen ———,

We received last night a letter signed by you, but written by another person, acquainting us with the determination of the Committee, " that at the adjournment of the Convention " we should return immediately to London." This determination we will undoubtedly conform unto, unless it be (as we hope and trust it will) contradicted in your next ; for if the Committee abide by it, we, who by being on the spot, and thoroughly acquainted with the state of the country, can judge with certainty thereon, do assure you, that *our immediate return to London* will be attended with very bad consequences ; for at present all the country Societies look up to us to come among them, to advise, to encourage them, to assist

them by our presence, that we exist, that we have been long from England for the purposes of Union and Reform, and that the time is near at hand when such Reform must take place. Nothing, dear friends, must force us from Scotland at present, but the absolute impossibility of bearing the expenses attending our mission; and those expenses may be somewhat lightened by recalling one of us, and leaving the other; our Norwich friends may likewise bear a part of them: so that unless the funds of the Society are very low indeed, no excuse for recall can be valid, unless founded on *fact*; and that, we must remind you is our concern, not yours. While, therefore, the idea of uniting our Society with the whole kingdom of Scotland affords you a pleasing prospect, let us do every thing in our power to *prevent* that union; and this can only be done by a longer residence in the country, and by visiting the several Societies which have sent delegates to Edinburgh, and would think themselves ill used if we did not take their town in our way. Consider of it, therefore, we beseech you, and let us have your answer immediately.

The Convention proceed with great spirit. We sit daily; and last week we came to a resolution which we fancy will give pleasure to every friend to Reform. As the minutes are to be printed, we will, at present, only give you the heads of it; viz.

That should any attempt be made by Government for the suspension of the Habeas-Corpus Bill, the introduction of a Convention Bill, or the landing of foreign troops in Great Britain or Ireland, the Delegates are immediately to assemble in Convention at a certain place, the appointment of which is left with a Secret Committee—That when seven Delegates shall be thus assembled, they shall declare themselves permanent; and when their number amounts to twenty-one, they shall proceed to business.—Thus you see we are providing against what may happen.

Citizen Gerald's health is so far recovered, as not to prevent him from fully attending his duty. We cannot say as much of Citizen Sinclair, from the Society for Constitutional Information. He has been confined to his bed ever since Saturday

by a violent fever and sore throat; he is somewhat better this morning. He is a valuable young man; and, should he die, his loss would be severely felt; not indeed by his confidants, who have briefly abandoned him, but by all the friends of Freedom. He is a member of our Society, and we recommend him to your notice.

You will before this have received our list of the 26th instant, acknowledging the receipt of your letter of the 23d, together with a remittance of £. 12:12s. Our time is so constantly employed, that we find it absolutely impossible as yet to write to you more than once a week, and even that on no fixed day: eighteen hours out of the four and twenty are devoted to public business, and you may rest assured they are not mispent. We are happy to hear that you go on as well in the South as we do in the North.—Letters convey but very imperfectly, and with no great degree of safety, what we might wish to inform each other of.—You have done us a material injury by neglecting to send us a parcel of our publications, and a number of copies of the Jurymen's Right: pray do not delay them any longer, and among them some of the letters to Dundas. We sent you an Edinburgh Gazetteer last week; we will send you another to-morrow; you will therein see part of what has passed in the Convention.

Wa noda

Effectiveness

Your Fellow-Labourers in the Cause of Reform.

JOSEPH CORAL, Indiana.

M^{me} MARGAROT, Déléguée.

M. M. would be glad to receive a line from T. H. about private business of his own.

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Copy of a Letter from Mr Margaret to the Secretary of the
London Corresponding Society.

Fellow Citizen, Edinburgh, 3th December 1793.

We desire that a copy of the inclosed papers be kept by the
[X] Society.

Society, and that another copy of them be delivered, without delay, to *Clifton Martin*, in order that he may present them upon immediately.

You will already have had confused accounts of what has taken place here for the last four days; but on Tuesday next the *Edinburgh Gazetteer* shall (if despotism permit) give you a complete detail of every thing. The Society will thereby be able to discover, that an arrival in Scotland has been productive of great advantage to the cause, and at the same time has given great alarm to our enemies. We are very much surprised at the renitence of the Society. While we are expending our life and liberty, while we are devoting our time and our exertions to their service, while we are incurring numberless expenses, and affronting danger that would stagger the most hardy of them; while we are doing all this, we are nevertheless obliged to restrain them of it, and that *forgiveness* we now become more necessary than ever. Surely the pecuniary exertions of any individual in the Society, can never be compared to our endeavours. Honoured with their confidence, we find ourselves happy in being placed in the front of the battle: but let them remember that our sacrificing ourselves will be of little use, unless they afford us a proper support, and that most immediately. Not daring any longer to trust to the post, we send you all these papers in a parcel. You will be so good as to make us acquainted with their safe arrival.—Gerald wishes to get to London as soon as possible: he will communicate that which cannot be so fully expressed by letter: you may consider this as a private letter, but you may read such parts of it as you think proper to any member of the Society, especially where it may be productive of good.—You will see by the inclosed papers, that *Power* has proceeded in a most arbitrary manner: almost all the prominent characters in the Convention have been, or are to be apprehended and examined.—Lord *Dart* will, we believe, meet with no greater favour than ourselves: we understand that there is a warrant out against him. As an account of what has happened to us, would exceed the bounds of a letter, we will only just give you a sketch of it, by way

way of journal, referring you, as we said before, to next Tuesday's Gazetteer.

Thursday Morning, at 7 o'clock.

A Sheriff's officer, followed by five other men, entered our bed room; informed us he had a warrant (which however he refused to show) for apprehending us, and seizing our papers. We remained confined all day; at night we were examined and admitted to bail, each in the sum of 2,000 marks.

Friday Morning, 9 o'clock.

We are sent for again without a warrant, for the purpose of being present at the opening of a small trunk, containing our papers; but M. M. protesting against the illegality of the whole of the proceedings, and refusing to give up the key, the Sheriff-Substitute and the Procurator-Fiscal dared to proceed no further in the business.

Saturday Morning, 9 o'clock.

Two messengers came again into our room, with Gerald; they left a summons to appear at 10 o'clock with M. M.—They left nothing but a request to accompany Gerald to the Office; yet, when arrived there, he found that a warrant was issued against him, for the purpose of detaining him a prisoner, while the box was opened, and the papers examined. M. M. still persisting in his refusal, the key was forced from him, the trunk was opened, the papers examined, and partly reflected; the other part was kept, and a declaration drawn up, which he was required to sign, but refused, protesting against the whole of the business.—Gerald, however, signed what was drawn up in his name, and we were once more liberated; and since then, now already 24 hours, no further persecution has been commenced against us. But while we, as individuals, were thus harassed, (Thursday) the whole of the Convention were equally ill-used.—Many of them were taken

Appendix, G.

Extract from the Evidence taken on the 22d of May
1794, before the Privy Council.

THOMAS THOMPSON, Esq. member for Eddisbury, attending their Lordships, was called in, and asked, If he was a member of the Constitutional Society? to which he answered, That he was.

Extracts from his Evidence.

Q. How long have you been a member of this Society?

A. I cannot exactly recollect, but think about half Christmas.

Q. Did you attend the meetings of the Society regularly?

A. When I was in town I did.

Q. Was you present on the 28th of March, when a letter was read from the London Corresponding Society, of the 17th of March, with certain resolutions [*which were shown to Mr Thompson in the last*] were included, and a resolution and order thereupon made by the Constitutional Society.

A. I was.

Q. Were you present at a meeting of the 4th April, when a resolution was made respecting the appointment of Delegates to confer, &c.?

A. I do, upon consideration, recollect it—but I opposed the appointment of a Convention.—Another person and I decidedly and loudly opposed it, and went away, understanding that it had passed in the negative.—I opposed it on the grounds of its being a bad and improper mode of proceeding—and that it would be better to present a petition to Parliament.—I do not recollect that any other person besides myself and the person already named opposed this proposition.

Q. You recollect, then, being present upon the 4th of April?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you remember a deputation being appointed to confer with the London Corresponding Society?

A. I do remember an agreement to appoint a delegation; but I do not recollect the names of the persons of whom that delegation was to consist.

Q. Do you recollect the subsequent resolution for appointing a Committee of correspondence?

A. I do not recollect it; but rather think I went away before it passed.—I usually left the Society before it broke up, as I slept in the country, and of course many resolutions were passed after I went away.

Q. Do you think it right to state what you particularly recollect of the resolution respecting the appointment of a Convention?

A. I recollect the opposing it, with the person already named; and I recollect it was carried in the negative.

Q. Is it entered on the books of the Society, that the motion for appointing a Convention was negatived?

A. I do not know; but it certainly was carried in the negative.—I recollect leaving the Society with a firm conviction that it had been negatived; and I have since talked with the person already named on the subject, who understood so, as well as myself.

Q. Can you state the name of any person who opposed the appointment of a Convention, except yourself and the person you have named?

A. I cannot—that person was against it from the first mention of such an idea.

Q. Was there any debate upon it?

A. There was.

Q. Do you recollect the names of any of the persons who spoke for the appointment of a Convention ?

A. I do not—there was a good deal of confusion.

Q. Did you ever see the printed resolutions of the Society ?

A. I do not recollect that I did.

Q. Have you any reason to believe that the resolution against the appointment of a Convention was reduced to writing ?

A. Probably it was : I made a memorandum of it, as I took minutes myself ; I always did so for my own satisfaction, and to refer to upon occasion.—The memorandum I made on this occasion, stated particularly that it had been carried that no Convention should take place. I was always decidedly against Delegates being sent from the different Societies and towns. I took minutes even of what passed at the meetings of the Friends of the People, though I think them very idle persons.

Q. Have you any one of these memorandums ?

A. I have not—I have looked for them, and could not find one—They were upon scraps of paper ; and not thinking them of importance, I did not preserve them.

Q. As you opposed the formation of a Convention, what did you conceive the Convention was to do if it did meet ?

A. I opposed a Convention, having seen the evils of it in other places ; and not thinking it the best means of obtaining the object in view.

Mr Thompson having attended the Committee of Secrecy appointed by the House, his evidence before the Priory Council was read to him ; and he was asked, If he wished to state any thing in explanation of that evidence ?

Mr Thompson desired to explain and alter it ; and observed, that in the account given of his evidence before the Council, he is stated to have said, that at the meeting on the 4th of April he does not recollect any other person, besides the per-
son

But he mentioned to the Privy Council and himself, opposed the proposition for a Convention; he now begs to say, that he meant to say, that he does not recollect what other persons, besides himself and the person before alluded to, opposed that proposition.

It is stated in the evidence, that Mr Took signed the letter to request a contribution for Mr Skirving. Mr Thompson meant to say he was to sign the letter, as Chairman of the evening.

It is stated in the evidence, that he was asked, if he ever saw the printed resolutions of the Society? To which he is stated to answer, He did not recollect he did: Mr Thompson desires to say, that he had never seen before the book shown to him by the Attorney General at the time that question was put to him.

And as to the last question, Whether he had ever attended any meeting since the 2d of May? he begged now to say, that he went once, with an idea of taking his name out of the books of the Society.

With respect to Mr Thompson being present when the toasts were drunk; he begged to say he certainly was, but that he did not drink them all, being unwell, and the wine being bad.—On being shown the toasts at the Council, he said, he thought some of them very absurd.

Mr Thompson was then asked by the Committee,

If there was any individual, besides the person before alluded to, that joined you in opposition to the proposition for a Convention?

I cannot recollect—but there must have been several, as the question was negatived.

When and where did Mr Thompson first see or hear the list of these toasts?

From the Attorney General in the Privy Council Room.—Mr Thompson was not present at any meeting of the stewards when the toasts were drawn up, previous to the dinner.

Do you recollect Mr Sharpe being present on the 15th of April, during the debate on a proposed resolution containing the word "Conversion?"

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Have you any recollection of Mr Horne Tooke, in the course of such a debate, remarking, that the debate about the word " Convocation " was all nonsense; it was only between a Latin word and an English one?

The following

Appendix H

Copy of a Letter from the British Society for Constitutional Information, to the London Corresponding Society.

Follow Citizens.

Drafted, 28th January 1964.

I AM again authorized to write to you, signifying the gratitude of our Society for your second epistle, which came to my hands the 3d inst. After reading its contents, I collected as many of our friends as I conveniently could that evening. We read—we blessed—we took courage ;—we did more, for we resolved on re-assembling, as we had appointed prior to the determination we announced in our last. We intend publishing an Address, or something declaratory of our sentiments, with all convenient speed ;—as soon as this is effected, we shall send a copy or copies to you. From the Courier and Evening Gazette, we have had information of the trial of Mr Margatot, and his sentence to 14 years transportation. We are by no means at a loss in forming a judgment of the noble cause in which he with others are embarked, *we would we be frightened at such failures.* You see, Citizens, your second epistle has quickened our courage, and vivified our patriotism, and roused us to resolution ; *and more, our number is now considerably increased.*—Perhaps your third epistle may do greater things still ;—we are sensible 'tis a noble—'tis a virtuous

—'tis a godlike and immortal cause in which we are now mutually embarked; and though for parts our effort can be but a feeble one, yet the cause we espouse is mighty—is evergrowing—it will finally prevail and prosper: it is our firm opinion, could we but arouse them, that Patriots would become nearly the majority of our city. We expected to have had the dozen of the Englishmen's Rights, which you mentioned in your first epistle—hope you will send them speedily.

We are, Fellow Citizens,

Yours sincerely,

The Bristol Society for Constitutional
Information, &c.

At a general meeting of the Delegates of the United Societies
at Norwich, held 24th February 1794.

It was unanimously resolved, "That one or more Delegates
" shall be sent to the next General Convention, chosen as called
" for by our London Correspondents."

Copy of a Letter from the Bristol Constitutional So-
ciety, to the Secretary of the London Corresponding
Society.

Bristol, 24th April 1794.

Fellow Citizens,

You may be sensible, from our last communication, that in the infancy of our patriotic efforts, we had many difficulties to overcome, and many strong prejudices to combat.—We laid open to you our real situation; we told you our determination to address the public; and assured you of our unshaken perseverance in the glorious cause of Freedom.—This perseverance, however, and these exertions of an individual Society, can but little avail, if the Societies in the different parts of the kingdom are in themselves disunited, or do not aid and assist each other, agreeable to the principles of philanthropy and fraternity which they so warmly profess.

Under

Under this idea, we conceive ourselves treated with a degree of injustice, by your Society not answering our last letters. The reasons may be good.—At present, we are candid enough to confess, that the circumstance does not appear to us in the most favourable point of view. Our *Address*, of which we send you a few copies, we find to have a good effect, and is likely to bring us the assistance of many friends, while our enemies acknowledge there is something very fair and reasonable in the production.—This is an absolute victory; and we have reason to congratulate ourselves on the prospect of success it opens to us. With a mixture of pain and pleasure, we saw an account of your last general meeting; we lament that the *strong hand of Despotism* should so often interfere to prevent the assertion of the Rights of the People, while we rejoice in your manly Constitutional perseverance, and applaud and approve your resolution of forming another General Convention. Our increasing numbers give us every reasonable hope of soon being able more effectually to co-operate with you; while, for the reasons formerly stated, we cannot yet make a positive promise on that head. We hope for an immediate answer.—Favour us with your opinion of our *Address*, and transmit a sketch of your Plan respecting the General Convention.

By order of the Committee of Delegates appointed by
the British Constitutional Society.

Copy of a Letter from Newcastle to the Secretary of the London
Corresponding Society.

Newcastle upon Tyne, 24th April 1794.

By desire of a number of friends to a radical Reform in the Constitution here, I make free to trouble you. We live in a place where an aristocratic Magistracy endeavours to stop the genial and benign spirit of national liberty from spreading; notwithstanding a very good number are found here that dare assert the natural and unalienable rights of man, and bear their testimony against the tyrannical encroachments of assumed power on those rights. A good number have formed them-

Self

schools into Societies, and meet weekly, admitting none but *known friends*, and have assured us none but that of *Newspaper Correspondence*. These were in great spirits while the British Convention continued to sit; but after their suppression, a damp was cast on the whole.—Subscribers were ready to be sent off the very night they were suppressed, and the Gazetteer stopped, which has since been reprinted to London, for the use of the persecuted warlike, Man and Patriot.—Being charmed with your sagacity and bold approbation of the conduct of your *Delegates* and with *desires for truth, Margaret and Gerald*, and find your name signed Secretary to the Corresponding Society, we wish to copy your example; and beg, if you think us worth your notice, give us your views and intentions as soon as convenient, which, I hope, will be a means to stimulate and increase our numbers. But this should not come to you, as I have an uncertain disposition, I forbear troubling you more at present, in hopes of being favoured with your future correspondence.—Farewell, *hoping the Hydra of Tyranny and Impiety shall soon fall under the Galvanism of Truth and Reason.*

Yours, with all due respect, &c.

Copy of a Letter from the Constitutional Society at Norwich
to the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society.

Gentlemen * * *, Norwich Societies, 25th April 1794.

It is with great satisfaction we view the manly conduct of you and your colleagues, especially when, surrounded as you are, by a domineering aristocracy, who, notwithstanding their great blunders, are but chicken-hearted—witness our Norfolk Quixotes, who, after being completely foiled at the county meeting, were determined to subscribe to support an armed aristocracy: But, pray, tell it not in the metropolis, that a noble Marquis subscribed no more than £. 200, and another high-pensioned Lord but £. 100; an Alderman and leader, and very fierce for Church and King, the enormous sum of £. 40: These are the men who are ready to spend their lives and fortunes;—but enough of such privileged beings! We should be

glad

glad to know whether the Friends of the People consent to a Convention, and whether they will take an active part.

Please to accept of a few of our bills. We should esteem it a favour that you would send us a few of your late Declarations.

P. S. Many of our friends are fully convinced of the necessity, legality, and rationality of a Convention: But, Query, Whether the time be expedient?

Copy of a Letter from the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society to Newcastle.

1st May, 1794.

Citizen,

It is with pleasure the London Corresponding Society hear that a Society *on a similar plan, and with the same patriotic objects* in view, is likely to be established at Newcastle upon Tyne.—If ever a crisis arrived that required the exertions of the people to stop the torrent of corruption, infamy, and despotism, that seems likely to overwhelm them, it is the present—in God's name then, let us use those exertions.—We are called upon by every thing that is dear to us, as men, and as Christians. The cause of truth and liberty must finally be omnipotent; therefore doubt not that the glorious reign of Liberty and Equality will ere long be established, and *modern governments, with every appendage of wickedness and corruption, will flee in time from their genial influence, as beasts of prey to their dens of rapine and darkness from the rising sun.* The London Corresponding Society have beheld, with indignation, *the rapid advances of despotism in Britain, and are ready cordially to unite with every other Society in the three Kingdoms, who have for their object a full and efficient representation of the people: they therefore have deputed six of their members to meet six members of the Society for Constitutional Information, to form a Committee of Correspondence and co-operation; this Committee meets regularly twice a week at No. 2, Beaufort Buildings, Strand, where any member delegated by your Society will meet with every information required.—We inclose you a few of our resolutions, entered into at our general meeting*

meeting on the 14th of April, which will be sufficiently explanatory of our sentiments and views. *We heartily unite with you in wishing that the Hydra of Tyranny and Oppression may soon fall under the Goldenrod of Truth and Reason.*

Copy of a Letter from the Secretary to the Constitutional Society at Sheffield, to the Secretary of the London Corresponding Society.

Sheffield, May 11th, 1794.

Friend and Fellow Citizen,

The friends of peace and Reform in Halifax having held a general public meeting in the open air, on Monday April 21st 1794, at which were many friends from Leeds, Wakefield, Huddersfield, Bradford, and the adjacent neighbourhood, the Friends of Freedom, after the meeting, agreed to hold a general meeting of Delegates at Bristol, in order to consider on the measures to be adopted by them preparatory to a *General Convention*. After which our worthy friend Citizen — of Halifax, being ordered to Sheffield to get the proceedings of the meeting printed, and consult with us upon the subject, they were advised by us to defer at present the meeting of Delegates, until further information from you on that subject. I was therefore ordered, at our last Committee meeting, to write to you, requesting the favour of as early intelligence as possible on that important business. We are not in the least intimidated in Sheffield, as we can call and hold a public meeting whenever circumstances render the same necessary; besides, in the house where I reside, we have a large commodious room, where the Society can peaceably meet in rotation.

By order of the Committee.

* * * * Secretary.

F I N I S.